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SPECIAL ISSUE

The Ultimate Disruptor

COVID-19 AND THE ECONOMIC MALAISE:
What Business Is (Re)thinking Now

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Eric Yuan is helping millions of people survive social distancing by giving away his videoconferencing tool, Zoom, for free. The move is earning him much respect, and when the pandemic has passed, the billionaire's business will likely be stronger than ever. But in the midst of a global crisis, can his app withstand a 610% spike in traffic virtually overnight and the scrutiny of primetime?

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With Covid-19 emphasizing the human element in advertising, brands should re-evaluate their strategies and reframe their messaging to stay relevant. Saying nothing is wrong too, add experts.

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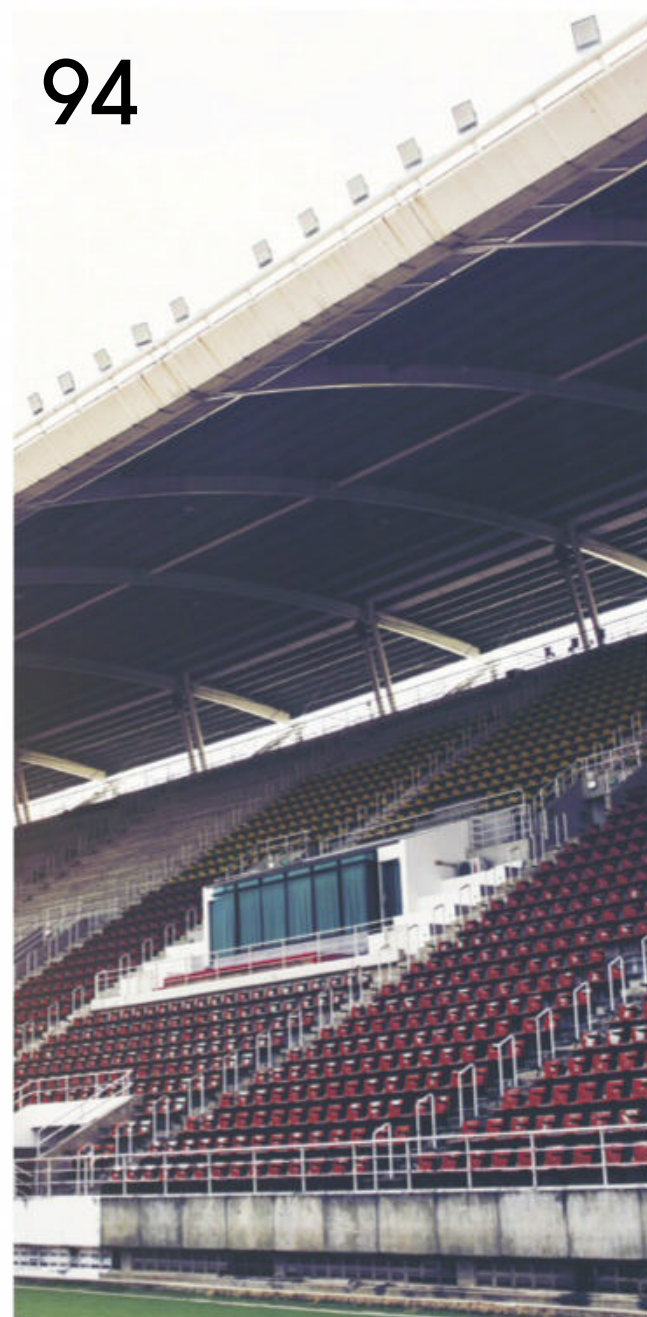
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Belgian designer Maison Martin Margiela must have peeked into the future when he debuted his embellished face masks in Paris in 2012. Eight years on, the likes of Louis Vuitton, Dior, Christian Siriano and other luxury fashion houses have transformed their studios and showrooms into mask-making facilities in the fight against Covid-19.

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By Motlabana Monnakgotla



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AFRICA

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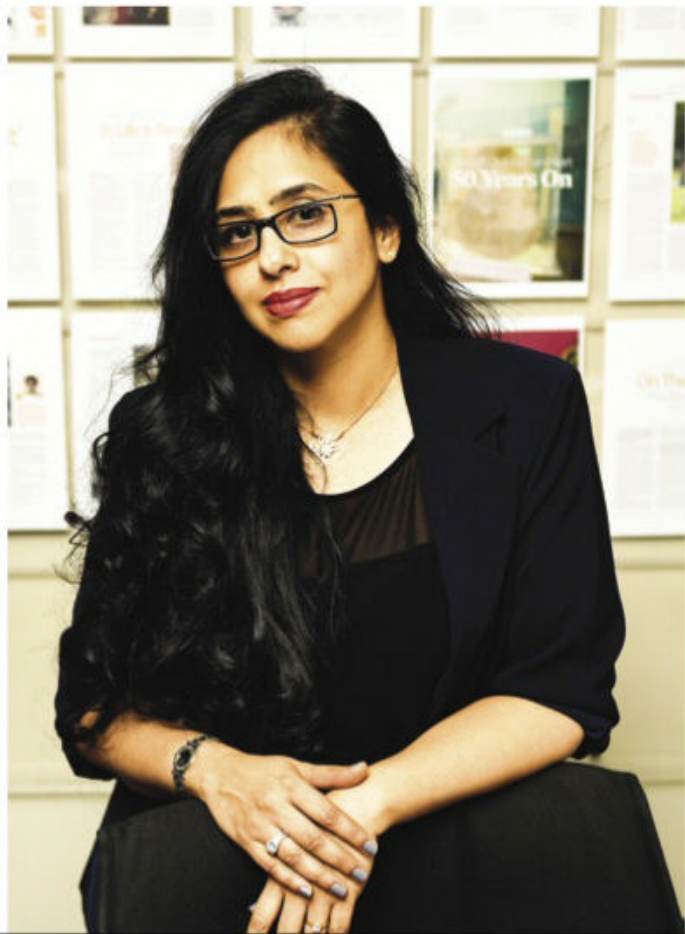


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THE NEW WORLD ORDER

UNDER THE LOCKDOWN, SO FAR, MY 55-DAY hiatus from the humdrum of normal life has helped me learn and unlearn like never before. Besides liberally peppering my sentences with words and terms otherwise not in common parlance (such as N95, PPE, WFH, furloughs, fomites), in my own way, I am trying to come to terms with the invisible opponent that has dealt us and the economy body blows that will take a long time to heal. “We just have to learn to co-exist with the virus; this epidemic could go on without a vaccine for two years,” said internationally-recognized South African scientist Dr Glenda Gray, rather clinically and realistically, in a recent Zoom interview with me.

We perhaps have no option but to see ourselves as conscripted soldiers in this fight against Covid-19, to protect ourselves and each other, armored with an all-new body language (masked interactions, metered distances and contactless commerce).

But then, look at the virus itself. It's destructive in its reach

and in an uncanny way, creative in its messaging. I can't help but think of Austrian political economist Joseph Schumpeter's theory of 'creative destruction'. While this will apply to the new forces of creation and destruction and the wave of economic and technological innovations and its diffusion the virus will no doubt spawn, also consider what this pervasive pandemic has proliferated: more tech-savviness, interconnectedness, diversity, business empathy, exalted levels of altruism, and not to mention the introduction to cleaner air and a new world hygiene awareness program.

Which is why we call Covid-19 'The Ultimate Disruptor' in this issue, a print edition brought out entirely remotely, for the first time ever.

Many of our social and economic constructs have been challenged in the enforced lockdowns to freedom and mobility, forcing us to cocoon ourselves in a new work-from-home economy.

The petri dish that is the planet today, at the mercy of a marauding virus, is a bizarre new landscape as we battle both contamination and containment.

As countries come out of death, debt and disease, positive market sentiment and rekindled growth will depend on a humble vaccine. By which time, half the planet would have experienced collateral damage, and will be broke and broken, with earth-shattering implications for the poor.

With economies slowly crawling out of shutdowns and as we brace for the inevitable 'with-Covid' era and the great lockdown recession that will come – Africa may be facing an economic contraction of up to 2.6% this year in the worst case – now, more than ever, is the time for renewed entrepreneurial vigor and social re-engineering. As we salute our saviors and survivors, survival must become a collective exercise.

Come rain, shine or Covid-19, we must live this through. 

RENUKA METHIL,
MANAGING EDITOR

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AKAGERA NATIONAL PARK



NYUNGWE NATIONAL PARK



VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK



LAKE KIVU

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT IN KIGALI

RWANDA'S TOP 5 DESTINATIONS

VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

Two and a half hours north of Kigali you will find Volcanoes National Park, home to most of the world's remaining mountain gorillas. Rwanda is among only three countries in the world where you can trek to see the majestic gorillas up close – a truly once in a lifetime experience.

LAKE KIVU

Kivu is one of Africa's Great Lakes, with deep emerald-green waters and a shoreline of magnificent mountains and fishing villages. The lake is dotted with uninhabited islands that can be explored by boat and provide the perfect location to relax and enjoy the peace of Rwanda's countryside.

NYUNGWE NATIONAL PARK

Nyungwe is one of the oldest rainforests found anywhere on the continent. The lush, green forest is home to over 300 bird species and 13 primate species including chimpanzees and

colobus monkeys. Take a stroll through the canopy along a 70m high walkway for exhilarating views of the rainforest.

AKAGERA NATIONAL PARK

Rwanda's largest national park is home to a diverse array of plant and animal life. The lakes, papyrus swamps, savannah plains and rolling highlands make Akagera an incredibly scenic reserve. The park is home to the elusive Shoebill stork, seven newly introduced lions, elephant, leopard and the shy but stunning roan antelope.

KIGALI

Rwanda's capital provides the perfect backdrop for a weekend getaway. As one of the safest cities in Africa, Kigali is quickly becoming a favourite for East African and international tourists. Savour the tastes of international cuisine at the city's best restaurants and enjoy live music at the many clubs and bars in Kigali.



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REBIRTH AND REDEFINING OUR PURPOSE: IS IT TIME FOR METAMORPHOSIS?

BY RAKESH WAHI, FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER, FORBES AFRICA

TO MY MIND, AN APT OXYMORON OF THE Covid-19 era is a quote from Vikings on *Netflix*: “The only thing I don’t know, is that I know that I don’t know.” Stupendous! As we float through the wilderness, the oxymoron resonates so well with the general view that we are “doing well if we are less wrong”. Sounds absurd. Wikipedia defines ‘absurdism’ as “a philosophy that refers to the fundamental nature of conflict in human tendency to find meaning and inherent value in life and inability in the same in a purposeless existence in an irrational universe”. Confusing? Let’s admit that despite the fourth industrial revolution, reliance on big data, algorithms and scientific advancement, we are lost while dealing with Covid-19. Little did I know on March 15 2020 when I left Cape Town after a memorable lunch with my son, Sid, at Le Chêne (Leeu Collection) in Franschhoek that I was entering a world where we would be planning our battles, day after day, sitting in front of my computer screen on a lifeline called ‘Zoom’.

Like any other journey, mine has been tumultuous, with the usual sprinkling of condiments that spice everyone’s life.

My own experiences have endured the 1991 Gulf War, the Asian crisis in 1994, the dotcom meltdown in 2000 and the global financial crisis in 2008.

On the whole, it has been turbo-charged and on steroids; I have embraced the good and the bad.

Until Covid-19.

After four decades of work experience, it’s uncharted territory when you abruptly feel numb, almost stoical. Not surprisingly, I have reflected on life a lot more in the last two



Photo by Motlabana Monnakgotla

months than ever before. Is there a message that we were all forced to stay at home at the same time and rethink our priorities? When traffic jams disappeared and pollution lifted, we could see the sky clearer than ever before. Is there a metaphor in this sublime vision? Is this a message from Him?

While pondering for answers, the word 'reborn' frequently comes to mind. This

“

Let's admit that despite the fourth industrial revolution, reliance on big data, algorithms and scientific advancement, we are lost while dealing with Covid-19.

happened to me once before, in 1982, when I had a near-death experience during an operational task in the military. That experience changed my existence as it made me realize that life is fragile and while we think we are in control; we seldom are.

The flip side was that it also taught me that life is precious and you can savor it completely, if you are not limited by your imagination. Armed with this belief, my entire approach to life has been philosophical, nomadic and cautiously (very) optimistic as I traversed my rebirth from being a soldier to an entrepreneur.

I have accepted that life will never be a bed of roses and is, in many ways, a 'dance of the seven veils' – "the incremental disclosure of tantalizing bits of information". The pundits infer that we live in cycles of eight to 10 years of 'bulls and bears' and events, largely manmade, are unveiled that lead to disruption and help us course-correct; we believe for the better. It is because of this confidence in the future that a few weeks back, I wrote about 'the optimist's theory of mitigation'; irrespective of circumstances and adversity, we subconsciously coerce our minds to believe that over time, all risks can and will be mitigated.

I am not going to dwell on the causes of

the pandemic, the rhetoric or data that we are exposed to daily. Neither is it opportune to dwell on how leaders are dealing with the pandemic; we need to go with the belief that everyone is doing their best and that a solution will be found. As human beings, we are wired to succeed or we will die trying to. Like everyone else, I am a firm believer that we will be reborn after this crisis that has shaken, and in part, uprooted the very foundation that we have become so complacent about. The worst, woefully, is yet to come; the true impact will be seen when H1 and Q3 2020 results are announced.

At a time like this, it helps to look at the numbers. On May 4, I watched Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), on *CNBC Africa*, as she talked about the role of the IMF in times of crises and the \$1 trillion (four times more than what had been provided for the financial crisis in 2008) war chest secured for appeals from 90 countries in dealing with the pandemic; that is roughly 35%-40% of the entire GDP of sub-Saharan Africa.

In her very erudite engagement, Ms Georgieva also reiterated the need for closing the social gap and ensuring that the impact is felt at the lowest economic strata of society. Guaranteeing that poverty will be alleviated has been the mantra of every leader; politicians use it during elections, business uses it for tax breaks, philanthropists through concerns, and socialites enjoy the feel-good factor. It has taken the dimension of corporate social responsibility, triple bottom line (profit, people and planet) and more recently, impact investing. If this was truly the objective of society, it's not difficult to achieve this goal.

Continuing to look at our magical numbers, global GDP is flirting around \$100 trillion and total global debt is around \$250 trillion (give or take a few trillion). The market capitalization of the 60 main exchanges in the world is around \$70 trillion. In terms of profitability, just the S&P 500 companies were projected to deliver approximately \$1.5 trillion in profits in 2020, the global banking sector would deliver profits of \$250 billion to \$300 billion and the technology sector approximately \$356 billion. These numbers are larger than the GDPs of most countries. The numbers for Africa are not as high but there are thousands of businesses that are doing well and will continue to do so after the pandemic is over. It's therefore, clear that while we have problems from time to time, we also have the resources to fix them; many times over. Hence, it's time for us to go back to the drawing board and start from zero by redefining our purpose, the difference we need to make and the legacy we will leave.

The management gurus are already rewriting our textbooks about the ‘new normal’; they are forecasting changing consumer needs and modified means to servicing them, evolved business models, conservation of cash, technology becoming expeditiously integral to our lives, more people working from home and international travel norms changing as will a number of other activities. Some businesses will shut down, others will consolidate, some will adapt and many new ones will emerge; the skills needed will change and therefore, the whole value chain of education will evolve.

The agricultural universe will be redefined and food security will be a global priority. The most important change will be the revival of entrepreneurship in the basic character of people, derailed by the myth or comfort zone of job security. Experts have ordained the need for greater collaboration and forming regional alliances so that there is closer cooperation between nations and indigenization between blocks. These have been done many times before but the conflicts of interest and desire to control will supersede the need for larger good. These are undisputable consequences but will not lead to a change in inequality levels.

The plight of the poor will not be addressed because the agenda has not changed. I believe that the message is being lost once again and we are missing an opportunity for real change.

In this difficult period, governments are taking the lead in helping their citizens; it is a natural expectation. However, elected governments have to walk a fine line between what they can do as populist actions; actions that can hurt their electoral currency and even more importantly, appease the powerful lobbies that keep them in office. Not all their actions therefore will meet the stipulated results; neither will they have the resources to solve all problems. They do, however, have the power to legislate the right policies to transfer prosperity. Other than government, we have witnessed a number of multilaterals like the IMF, the World Bank and many others provide immediate relief to essential services such as healthcare, food, pharmaceuticals and research for a vaccine. However, in other sectors, the unemployment rate has shot up and will continue to grow. In some sectors, it was inevitable, like the retail, real estate, tourism and hospitality sectors. The maximum impact has and will continue to be in the SME space that employs up to 70% of the work force. This segment is unlikely to get support from the banking sector owing to unrealistic criteria and will be crippled. The measures required are at two levels. The first is the short-term where large corporates,

“

Large corporates, commercial banks and other financial institutions need to come to the party; we have not seen this happening yet.

commercial banks and other financial institutions need to come to the party; we have not seen this happening yet. This is not about providing debt through well-crafted financial products and creating additional encumbrances on small business. There is a need for the large corporates sitting with cash to unlock their cash and help small businesses in their respective value chain to be able to sustain through this period and beyond. This sacrifice requires, if necessary, reducing the size of their own retained earnings, balance sheets and profitability. By doing so, they will ensure their own business continuity. This may come at a cost for the immediate term but the ecosystem will be preserved.

The second deals with medium- to long-term development. If we are to be truly reincarnated, the script must be rewritten and inequality must be the first value for rehabilitation. In reality, even though resources are abundant, the gaps have continued to widen and the levels of poverty have increased. This is largely because of how we have developed the economic value chain; people that make the most money are the financial engineers who are trading stocks and not those sweating in the field manufacturing products and delivering services. The cocoa, sugar or chicken farmer make 6% of the amount that the retailer makes selling the finished products, who in turn makes 50% less than the equity trader, who makes the most money trading on the stock. Anna, the tea lady in our office in Johannesburg, was charged an annual interest rate of 26% by one of the top banks to pay the college fees for her only son; no recourse. This is exploitation and needs to change through radical reforms of our entire banking system and the capital markets to harbor on making them very efficient but not for profit; the profit needs to be reinvested at the grassroots level. We need more farmers ploughing the fields, as at the end of the day, we cannot eat “paper stock”.

The pollution has lifted; we should see our metamorphosis clearly now. Choices are ours to make and we must reconsider our priorities. 🇵🇹

Nigeria's 60th Anniversary



On the cusp of Nigeria's 60th anniversary since its independence President Buhari's agenda for diversification has proved to be the key to unlocking the nation's economic growth while providing a stable foundation for the nation to thrive, prosper and build its glorious and victorious Next Level. Join us in celebration with the exclusive Forbes Africa to unravel Nigeria's magnificent past and the tremendous promise and prospects of its future in our upcoming special report focusing upon Nigeria's Diamond Jubilee.



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JEFF BEZOS TO BE WORLD'S FIRST 'TRILLIONAIRE'?

According to Comparisun, Jeff Bezos, founder of e-commerce company Amazon, is on

track to becoming the world's first trillionaire by 2026. Despite losing \$38 billion in 2019 following his divorce settlement to ex-wife MacKenzie Bezos, the billionaire remains the world's richest man worth \$145.4 billion. Bezos' wealth is increasing after the Covid-19 pandemic caused Amazon's stock to rise significantly, however, the company has reportedly faced criticism by its workers over working conditions and safety concerns during this period.



NEW ROLE TO KEEP FOOD SYSTEMS RUNNING

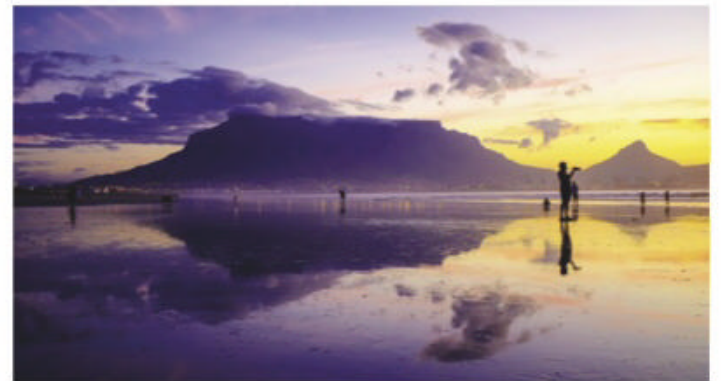
English actor Idris Elba (*pictured*), the man who played the late South African president Nelson Mandela in the 2013 biographical film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, has been designated a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and has launched an appeal with his wife Sabrina for a \$200 million coronavirus relief fund for rural communities, as per a report by APO. Elba, who announced he had tested positive for Covid-19 on March 16, launched the global coronavirus relief fund to help prevent the pandemic from creating a global hunger and food crisis, and to keep food systems running.



SUDAN CRIMINALIZES FGM

The Sudanese government has banned female genital mutilation (FGM), rendering it a criminal offence. The move comes after years of pleas and advocacy from numerous organizations around the world declaring female circumcision a human rights violation. The World Health Organization says it is estimated that more than 200 million girls and women have been subjected to undergo FGM in the countries where the traditional practice is prevalent.

"This practice is not only a violation of every girl child's rights, it is harmful and has serious consequences for a girl's physical and mental health," said Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF Representative in Sudan. According to the UN, 88% of women and girls in Sudan between the ages of 15-49 have undergone FGM. The carrying out of FGM in the northeast African country will now come with a jail sentence of three years.



Tourism Losses Big In The Mother City

Tourism in Cape Town, a major coastal drawcard in South Africa's Western Cape province, is under severe pressure in the Covid-19 regulations. The city's tourism sector surveyed businesses and the findings discovered that 56% of businesses in the city do not have a recovery plan in place. Furthermore, only 4% of businesses indicated they had the necessary resources to hold out for over a year. Businesses are feeling the pinch of the lockdown. The country may be in Level 3 from end of May, as part of its 'risk-adjusted strategy', but should that be prolonged, businesses may be unable to survive, resulting in 90,000 jobs lost in the sector the next six months.

Photo by MANDEL NGAN / AFP (Photo by MANDEL NGAN/AFP via Getty Images; Photo by Charles Coates/Getty Images; Photo by Rodney Quarcio IFAD; Photo via Getty Images

Sharpest Decline In Remittances

The World Bank has released a report predicting the sharpest decline of global remittances in recent history, of about 20%. The projected fall is due to the Covid-19 pandemic that has caused an economic crisis globally, seeing a decline in wages and employment in various countries. Critical financing for numerous vulnerable households is at risk as remittances to low and middle-income countries are projected to decline by 19.7 % to \$445 billion. The projection is a cause of concern as developing countries rely on remittances as a fundamental source of income. The organization says while remittances assist families with the affordability of food, healthcare and other essential needs, their costs are high. In Q1 of 2020, the global average cost of sending \$200 remains high at 6.8%, whilst sub-Saharan Africa's average cost is the highest, at about 9%. "The on-going economic recession caused by Covid-19 is taking a severe toll on the ability to send money home and makes it all the more vital that we shorten the time to recovery for advanced economies," said David Malpass, President of the World Bank Group.



FORMULA 1 DRIVER VETTEL PARTS WAYS WITH FERRARI

Four-time Formula One World Champion Sebastian Vettel and Ferrari will go their separate ways at the end of the F1 season.

In a statement, both parties decided there was no longer a "common desire to stay together". After four consecutive World Championship wins with Red Bull, the German driver joined Ferrari in 2015 with high hopes of bringing back the team's old winning ways that saw the legendary Michael Schumacher clinching five of his seven World Championships with the team. Whilst Vettel challenged the dominating team, Mercedes-Benz, his efforts were not enough to stop Ferrari's drought. For the 2021 season, the prancing horse announced Carlos Sainz as Vettel's replacement, joining the team's number one driver Charles Leclerc. Ferrari will now have two drivers under the age of 30.

– Compiled by Busi Lethole



TOP 10 PREDICTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

US-based futurist and author Jack Uldrich lists what he thinks will drive the post-Covid-19 world:

- Following only a decade after the 'Great Recession' of 2008, this Covid-19 recession/depression will encourage millions to become more 'conscious' consumers and more enthusiastic savers. This trend towards frugality will have a profound effect on the economy's ability to rebound.
- The rise of the 'Do-It-Yourself' economy. As people begin to relearn how to cook, preserve food, brew, and even cut one another's hair, many businesses will lose a percentage of customers.
- Businesses that try to go back to 'business as usual' will lose.
- 3D-printing will be transformed as businesses seek to shorten the supply chain.
- Robotics will advance because "robots don't get sick" and won't infect one another.
- Drones will continue to improve as the technology is used for everything from surveillance to medical supply deliveries.
- Businesses will come to understand survivability is more important than quarterly/annual success.
- The 'shut-in economy' and 'contactless commerce' will grow, and a strange '6-foot separation' economy could emerge.
- Electric vehicles may become even more popular because people are reluctant to touch gas pumps (among the most germ-infected surfaces).
- On a more positive note, the world could experience a wave of 'Corona-boom babies'.



BEYOND THE LOCKDOWN:

What Big Business Is Doing Now

Corporate Africa has to urgently pandemic-proof itself with new ideas, innovations and emotions, to merely stay alive fighting a marauding virus.

BY BUSI LETHOLE

THE VERDANT vineyards of Stellenbosch, a charming wine town in South Africa's Western Cape province, offer breath-taking, panoramic views of the rolling hills, valleys and mountain ranges fringing them.

Only that there are no tourists to marvel at them now – and perhaps will not be for a long time to come.

Like good wine, these views will stay but who will savor them?

Like every other industry on the planet, South Africa's wine industry too, which produces some of the finest wines and spirits globally and employs millions in its tourism collaterals, has been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Even with the President Cyril Ramaphosa (whose leadership at this time was commended by world leaders and media) easing lockdown restrictions to Level 4 on May 1, liquor and wine sales are prohibited, and the big players say the local industry has taken a hit.

Former banking CEO and wine entrepreneur Michael Jordaan speaks about the effects the crisis has had on business.

"Local sales represent 50% of industry turnover," says Jordaan. The export ban was lifted five weeks after the lockdown but by then, he feels "precious sales and rack space" in export markets were lost to foreign competitors. "Related wine businesses such as wine tourism or restaurants are suffering the most as income has gone to zero while many costs remain."

The wine industry is already a high-cost, low-margin business, he adds, with industry surveys showing that only 28% of wine grape producers made a profit in 2019.

Most wineries were cash-strapped to start with, and the pandemic has left a bitter after-taste.

"It is inevitable that many of the 290,000 jobs in the industry will be lost..." he says.

Premium wine houses are now looking at offbeat ways to sell and deliver online.

Jordaan's Bartinney Wines – in the Jordaan family since 1953 – is produced from a 28-hectare farm in Stellenbosch, and he says he has made it a priority to look after staff using savings and income from non-wine businesses.

"We're also exploring new export markets but struggle as this usually requires trips to sellers which are obviously not possible," he adds.

The wine-drinking wealthy across the continent are also not immune to the crisis. Some South African billionaires, listed by *Forbes* every year, made announcements to help fight Covid-19 even before the government announced the lockdown.

Billionaire Johann Rupert and family, worth \$4.6 billion (as of mid-May according to *Forbes*), announced R1 billion (\$54.73 million) through the Sukuma Relief Programme "consisting of grants and low-interest bearing loans with a 12-month repayment holiday, given to formal sole properties, closed corporations, companies and trusts". On April 6, the program closed the application platform on account of the overwhelming response. Ben Bierman, administrator of the program, told *CNBC Africa* the relief program received applications in excess of R2.8 billion (\$153 million).

Nicky Oppenheimer and family, worth \$7.5 billion (as of mid-May according to *Forbes*), made two contributions towards Covid-19 relief. The first made by Nicky and son Jonathan, pledging R1 billion (\$54.73 million) to the South African Future Trust (SAFT). Following in her brother Nicky's footsteps, the second pledge came from Mary Oppenheimer-Slack and her daughters who pledged R1 billion (\$54.73 million) to the state's Solidarity Fund, stating it's "most aligned to our concerns about basic needs, food, medicine, general care and gender abuse".

The Motsepe family pledged another R1 billion (\$54.73 million) to the country's coronavirus Solidarity Fund and said the pandemic has shifted the priorities of the Motsepe Foundation. The Founder and Chairman of the foundation, Patrice Motsepe, with a net worth of \$1.5 billion (as of mid-May as per *Forbes*), said: "The Motsepe family and companies we are associated with, will continue to do everything possible to assist



All wine markets have seen aggressive increase in retail and online sales... and South Africa was allowed to play for as long as stocks lasted. South African wines being traded online have been out of stock due to importers waiting for shipments. Exports which were meant to be sent six weeks ago were not allowed to ship, which means there will definitely be, in short, loss of revenue, loss of placements, and weakened position compared to competitors... It is estimated that the seven-week ban during the lockdown period could conservatively have a direct export revenue loss of close to R2 billion (FOB value), however, the damage to reputation and consistent supply as well as future market opportunities could in fact be astronomical in the longer term with the loss of listings for many South African wines within the retail environment." – Wendy Appelbaum, Founder and Chairperson, De Morgenzon Wine Estate, South Africa

health workers, poor rural and urban communities and all South Africans to prevail over the current coronavirus pandemic.”

Other established South African businessmen such as Douw Steyn and family pledged R320 million (\$17.5 million) through the Douw Steyn Family Trust.

Globally, tech billionaires such as Jack Dorsey, CEO of Twitter, worth \$4.7 billion, announced on April 7 that he was moving \$1 billion of his Square stock to support various causes including Covid-19 relief efforts. The tech billionaire didn't specify how much of the \$1 billion donation would be going towards the pandemic.

Chinese billionaire and Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma donated protective equipment to all 54 countries in Africa through his Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation. The donation includes a total of 1.1 million test kits, six million masks and 60,000 protective suits.

Global tech billionaire Bill Gates and his wife Melinda committed more than \$250 million through their foundation. According to *Forbes*, much of it will be spent on vaccines, treatment and diagnostic development.

Whilst the big dollar signs bring hope, the numbers for

in the WHO African region with a total population of one billion.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), “sub-Saharan Africa is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis that threatens to throw the region off its stride, reversing the development progress of recent years and slow the region's growth prospects in the years to come”. It predicts the region's GDP to contract by 1.6% this year, making it the worst forecast on record.

On its part, the African Development Bank (AfDB), led by president Akinwumi Adesina, is supporting the continent through the Covid-19 crisis with \$26 million for the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for the procurement of critical medical supplies. The bank also launched a \$3 billion ‘Fight Covid-19’ social bond, with bids exceeding \$4.6 billion. It also launched a \$10 billion Crisis Response Facility to support Africa to address the pandemic.

Because Africa's financial markets are less developed than many of its global counterparts, Gary Booysen, Director and Portfolio Manager at Rand Swiss based in Johannesburg, says: “They often struggle with liquidity. As the world grapples with the economic fallout of the lockdowns and Covid-19, risk appetite will almost certainly diminish. This will likely see money initially flowing out of more speculative frontier markets. This, in turn, could potentially result in undue pressure being placed on African financial assets.”

With these forecasts, what is the way forward? Corporate Africa is grappling with the hard reality and is in the process of re-strategizing itself. The only hope is if big businesses realize that they have to not just come up with forward-thinking views but also unlock much-needed solutions and even their balance sheets to help all in these times of uncertainty.

And technology and interconnectedness should be the forces driving these collaborations.

Makhtar Diop, the World Bank's Vice President for Infrastructure, states on the bank's website:

“Governments, regulators and the telecom industry must do all it takes to deploy affordable, reliable, and safe digital technologies... to work together to achieve the promise of new technologies for all and keep the world connected.”

On their part, telecom companies such as Vodacom have stepped up. Shameel Joosub, CEO of Vodacom Group Limited, says it plans to donate 20,000 smartphones, 100 terabytes of data and 10 million voice call minutes to South Africa's National Department of Health to collect and transmit data in real time for resource planning purposes as the government accelerates its Covid-19 testing campaign. Vodacom recently entered into a partnership with Discovery Health to offer free virtual consultations with doctors for the general public. The telecoms



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Covid-19 has essentially become a catalyst for the shift which was bound to happen.

– Sipho Maseko, CEO, Telkom Group

Covid-19 continue to bring gloom as worldwide statistics rise.

At the time of going to press, the number of cases globally was over five million, with the death toll over 325,000. So far, almost two million worldwide have made recoveries. Africa has over 90,000 cases, with 2,900 deaths and over 35,000 recoveries.

But the big global bodies overseeing the crisis say the world's youngest continent, Africa, may suffer heavily if the disease is not contained.

The World Health Organization said in a statement released early May that “83,000 to 190,000 people in Africa could die of Covid-19 and 29 million to 44 million could get infected in the first year of the pandemic if containment measures fail” as per a new study based on prediction modeling, looking at 47 countries



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We have a comprehensive portfolio of anaesthetics, many of which are being used in the clinical management of Covid-19. The greatest demand for our anaesthetic brands is from the European region and we are managing stock levels and working closely with our supplier networks in the best interests of all patients. Many of us have been impacted personally and this has increased our determination to persevere... I think South Africa acted quickly which has certainly contributed to our relatively low level of hospitalization and infection rates compared to other countries. This must be commended. How we continue to react will determine how we are assessed later and the impact that this will have on our people. Decisions taken during these times are challenging, with each option having wide-reaching consequences. If we remain in lockdown too stringently for a prolonged period, there is likely to be a major economic and human impact. Conversely, if we are cavalier and relax the lockdown measures too soon, we could advance to higher levels of infection and put the most vulnerable populations at risk.”

– Stephen Saad, Group Chief Executive, Aspen

company has experienced a significant increase in fixed and mobile network traffic since the lockdown, attests Joosub. As a result, Vodacom has accelerated its investment spend.

“As the world becomes more online and more digital, it would make fiber and 4G-investment ready for that. This has always informed our investment strategy. Covid-19 has essentially become a catalyst for the shift which was bound to happen,” says Sipho Maseko, CEO of Telkom Group, to FORBES AFRICA. The telecom provider delivered a tracking and tracing system for Covid-19, “in record time”, working with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in South Africa. Maseko believes that as big businesses face an economy and society that has been changed fundamentally by Covid-19, they will need to find innovative ways to adapt, deliver services, and drive growth in a challenging economic period.

Megan Pydigadu, Group Chief Financial Officer of EOH, a technology services provider in Africa, believes the company is systemic to South Africa’s IT backbone, and as a result, creates significant responsibility for the company as an organization during the pandemic.

“We have implemented short and medium-term cash flow forecasting which pre-warns us of anything we need to deal with,” says Pydigadu. On potential opportunities and trends coming out of the industry, Pydigadu believes that EOH needs to develop product solutions that will last beyond the company’s current circumstances.

“The ‘new normal’ is here to stay and is going to change the ways of working. There will be an increased need for virtualization and the effective use of information, AI and data to reduce costs as we face an ongoing recession in the medium-term,” says Pydigadu. The CFO says the company is looking at opportunities to accelerate digital transformation for its clients.

As companies continue to look for solutions, one thing is crystal clear.

Corporate Africa is reiterating the need to future-proof businesses through new innovations – and they have to act now.

For years, the question of whether businesses are prepared for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) has been posed. The

pandemic has no doubt now answered that question. Perhaps what we need to ask is how quickly companies must now adapt to 4IR.

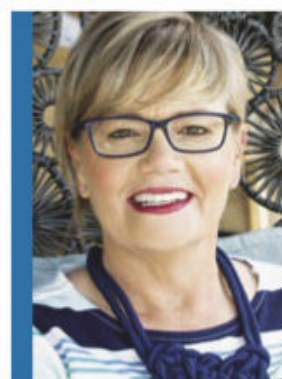
Darlene Menzies, CEO of Finfind, an online finance solution platform that brings together the providers and seekers of SME finance, believes online businesses will thrive as traditional forms of business grind to a halt.

“Tech innovators will find business opportunities in the

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Tech innovators will find business opportunities in the difficulty.

– Darlene Menzies, CEO, Finfind



difficulty, and we will see many new businesses birthed that provide solutions to address the gaps that this challenging time has presented,” says Menzies. She believes it’s important every business uses the lessons learned from the pandemic to ensure they are better prepared for any future disaster.

She reckons the world will see a lot of change with more firms deciding to move to a hybrid of virtual and physical work, and many transitioning to an entirely virtual operation. Menzies says the pandemic has also exposed the need to increase

the accessibility of the digital economy to people at the base of the pyramid, in order to ensure that everyone can take full advantage of the benefits.

As the world finds itself at the mercy of the digital economy, perhaps more can be achieved through partnerships?

Kweku Bedu-Addo, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank in South & Southern Africa, says the pivotal lesson during the pandemic has been the need for greater collaboration.

“It’s clear that we need better collaboration globally to be able to identify a developing crisis sooner, to enable the world to react faster to minimize the fallout,” says Bedu-Addo.

Speaking on digital technology, Bedu-Addo believes that many in the banking industry, and other industries, have had to quickly and safely expand access and capabilities in the area of technology.

“If it [digital technology] is fully integrated into a company’s strategy, it can benefit all employees and help businesses thrive in a time like this.” Standard Chartered has committed \$1 billion of financing to support companies that provide goods and services to help in the fight against Covid-19. In addition, the bank has launched a \$50 million global fund with donations from colleagues and the bank to provide assistance

“The Bank of Kigali’s excellent liquidity and capital position pre-Covid will allow us to weather the shock and remain a champion in financing the economy,” says Karusisi. On the opportunities she sees for the industry, she says that clients have had to shift their behavior toward digital channels, and cashless means of payment. For this reason, she believes digital transformation in the industry will be accelerated. Should the worst happen, Karusisi believes the bank’s most pessimistic stress tests show that it would withstand “a shock implying large business and retail defaults as a result of our strong capital position”. She adds: “Rwanda recovered from the war and the genocide against the Tutsi only 26 years ago. Our resilience has been tested and Bank of Kigali was the only bank to avail clients’ balances and savings after the tragic events...”

Another bank in the country is I&M Bank Rwanda Limited. Robin Bairstow, the bank’s CEO, tells us its top priority during the pandemic is to maintain operations, protect the workforce, and keep customers safe and informed. Bairstow mentions the bank has anticipated changing customer needs, and has agreed to allow interest and principle deferrals for three months, and in some cases, longer for all affected customers. They have also reduced lending rates to provide support to clients. He believes that social distancing has given an opportunity for banks in terms of shifting customers to digital channels.

“We have seen a 650% increase in alternate channels in the last two weeks of March alone (when the lockdown began). If this trend continues, we would have changed behavior and the cost of serving customers will reduce in the industry and the momentum will continue due to the convenience of digital offerings,” says Bairstow.

In South Africa, internet group Naspers, one of the largest technology investors in the world, was one of the first, alongside the Ruperts and Oppenheimers, to announce funds for Covid-19 relief efforts. The company contributed R1.5



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We have seen a 650% increase in alternate channels in the last two weeks of March alone.

– Robin Bairstow, CEO,
I&M Bank Rwanda

to communities affected by Covid-19.

Similar examples abound in the rest of the continent. In East Africa, more banks have responded to the pandemic.

The CEO of Rwanda’s largest commercial bank, Bank of Kigali, says the bank’s staff set up a fund to support the most vulnerable in Rwanda’s communities affected by the health crisis. “We have provided relief measures to our clients, waived various transaction fees as well as penalties for late payments. We have also designed loan products to support both retail and SME clients going through this difficult period,” Diane Karusisi tells FORBES AFRICA. The CEO’s forecasts for the medium-term are that economic growth will be significantly affected and all stakeholders will have to coordinate efforts to support speedy economic recovery.





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My team and I are trying to find or create new projects where we are able to work with people remotely.

– DJ Fresh

billion (\$82 million) in emergency aid to the government's response; of that, R500 million (\$27.3 million) was allocated to the Solidarity Fund, and it's buying R1 billion (\$54.7 million) worth of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies.

In an interview with FORBES AFRICA, Naspers South Africa's CEO, Phuti Mahanyele-Dabengwa, says: "We have a strong and liquid financial position to navigate uncertain times but we are not immune to the impact of Covid-19 and like all other businesses in the global economy."

On the opportunities ahead, Mahanyele-Dabengwa believes in the longer term, Naspers' payments and fintech business is expected to benefit across its markets from large sectoral trends, including more customers transacting online and more online transactions being executed through alternative forms of payment, instead of cash.

Moving to the travel and lifestyle sector, tourism has been hit the most. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that industry passenger revenues could plummet \$252 billion or 44% below 2019's figure for the world.

"Airlines need \$200 billion in liquidity support simply to make it through. Some governments have already stepped forward, but many

more need to follow suit," says IATA's Director General and CEO, Alexandre de Juniac, in a web statement.

In South Africa, Marc Wachsberger, Managing Director of The Capital Hotels & Apartments, a luxury hotel and apartment room provider that also offers conference venues and meeting spaces, believes travel will change dramatically in the future.

"As social distancing becomes the norm, hotel groups that will survive will be sure to go the extra mile in cleaning and sanitation protocols, while giving guests the room they need to maintain sufficient physical distance."

With approval to operate during lockdown, Wachsberger says the company helped a few businesses to remain open during this time. It pivoted its business and implemented steps to offer safe spaces for guests and their staff, through 'self-isolation hotels' for anyone needing to isolate for approximately 14 days, or until they have been cleared; and 'sanitized sanctuaries' for families and corporates who want to live and work freely during this time. The company has partnered with Discovery Health in operating The Capital Empire in Sandton in the heart of Johannesburg as a Covid-19 isolation recovery facility called 'The Get Well Hotel'. He adds that occupancy is expected to increase as more industries return to work and need to isolate or quarantine. He reckons hotels that can offer contactless check-ins, room access, check-outs and payments will be the way forward.

Wachsberger believes the meetings, incentives conferences and exhibitions (MICE) industry is feeling the ripple effect of the virus and will continue to struggle as business travelers stay away. Many venues will flounder as large meetings and gatherings can only possibly convene again in Level 1 of South Africa's 'risk-adjusted strategy'.

Another company steering itself for the future is Bolt. The app, formerly known as Taxify, offers services from ride-hailing to food delivery. Gareth Taylor, Country Manager for Bolt in South Africa, says the company now offers free sanitization liquid refills at all its driver centers on a daily basis.

The ride-hailing company has launched several new services to provide alternative ways for drivers to continue to earn an income. One such is the 'Bolt Isolated Car', featuring a physical barrier between the front and back



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The lockdown is very hard on everyone. When you lose your job, how do you feed your family? You will need to buy low-cost, nutritious foods, like beans, vegetables and fruit, whole wheat bread and dairy. As a 72-year-old, I have to remain isolated. There is a lot of suffering worldwide. I am not an expert on overcoming this crisis. The best I can do is give positive and useful messages on social media every day... Women will have to find work post-Covid in order to survive. South African women are strong and have a great sense of humor. Don't lose that."

– Maye Musk, author of the new book, 'A Woman Makes A Plan', and mother of South African tech billionaire, Elon Musk

seats, limiting the risk of exposure between drivers and passengers. Taylor says there will be a bigger focus on businesses connecting and assisting one another through partnerships.

“Businesses that can collaborate the most effectively and to the greatest mutual benefit, will win,” says Taylor. On the future of the transport industry, he says it is likely to evolve as electric vehicles become more available. “Electric vehicles are cheaper to run and maintain than petrol or diesel vehicles, which could in turn make transport more affordable, particularly for the more cash-strapped.” Taylor reckons that as more people and businesses have become accustomed to a work-from-home labor force, it’s likely that car ownership will decrease.

With the cancellation of movie premieres, concerts and big ticket events, those in the entertainment industry are also feeling the heat. And this includes actors and celebrities.

In a recent Instagram Live session (which seems to be the order of the day), Hollywood actress Gabrielle Union told her fans that a number of black entertainers are grappling to pay their bills as they are getting fewer gigs during this crisis, and that “this stoppage of work and money is impacting marginalized ‘celebrities’ the most”.

Over the last few months, people working in the entertainment industry have had to look for other alternatives of making money.

Closer home, as a DJ who travels for shows around the world, Thato Sikwane, known as DJ Fresh, realizes that DJing is one of the jobs that has definitely taken a knock.

The DJ says he’s fortunate to have work outside of his DJ career. “Radio being one of the biggest mediums and forms of entertainment and information providers, we are



marked as essential support workers. I still have *Fresh on 94.7*, Monday to Friday,” he tells FORBES AFRICA.

Whilst the entertainment industry has been rattled by the lockdown and travel bans around the world, DJ Fresh says players in the music industry will need to carry on finding new windows of opportunities to keep generating personal incomes.

Furthermore, he states that they will need to have bold ambitions to change the way in which they previously applied their minds, in order to survive.

“I am working on new music and excited for it to be released. I have live streams every Sunday on my Facebook page where I work with Oskido and a few other industry mates to create sets called *Legends Live*. My team and I are trying to find or create new projects where we are able to work with people remotely and that will help some of the unemployed people.”

The South African DJ believes those that fail to fully utilize and exploit their digital presence during this period, will have wasted a crisis.

Through trial and error, big business and big names are re-evaluating, re-strategizing, and trying innovative ways to face the disruptive virus and rebuild themselves sustainably for the future, knowing only too well, that if they don’t adapt, they will surely die. 🦠



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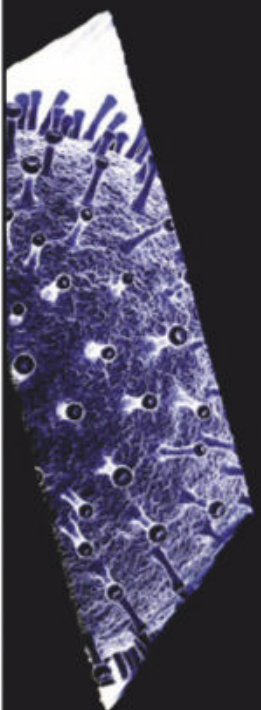
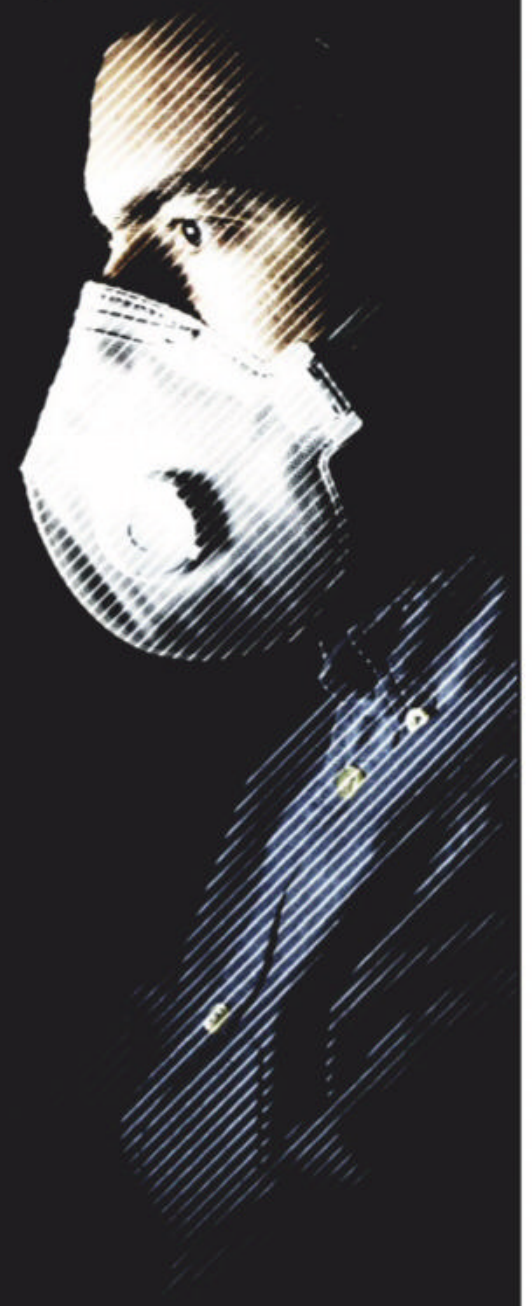
Food retail will be the least affected in Botswana. Still, there are a few categories [where] the revenue has dropped. We are trying to boost our online channel to maintain the revenue stream. We are expecting that by July, it will get back to normal.”

– Ramachandran Ottapathu, CEO, Choppies, Botswana

Covid-19: The Ultimate Disruptor

The coronavirus has rebooted every aspect of life as we know it. Across Africa, home-grown ideas and small-scale technological innovations are coming to the fore to help combat it.

BY KAREN MWENDERA



IT'S 8PM IN JOHANNESBURG

on March 29, the first Sunday of the lockdown in South Africa, and a team from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) is hard at work, not in the comfort of their homes, but at an innovation lab, designing the first two prototypes of a face shield.

Letlotlo Phohole and Moses Mogotlane, the two members of the team, are working on paper and transparent face shield models, with a Perspex headband, and they are doing all of this at a Transnet-sponsored innovation space hosted at Wits; together in thought, but apart in (social) distance.

Their work would use 3D-printers and a laser-cut solution, in coming up with the very first version of a face shield developed by Wits.

Reeling from the disastrous effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, just like any other part of the world, Africa is turning to home-grown solutions such as this to tackle a global problem.

“Design can save the world,” says Dr Randall Paton, one of the engineers in charge of coordinating this project. And for any innovation at this time, speed is paramount.

“I think that innovation, especially of the sort that leaves us with a legacy of new products or ideas, is essential in tackling an issue like the coronavirus crisis,” he adds.

The face shields were initially designed for health workers at Netcare Hospitals, made from a flat pack consisting of two pieces that can rapidly be assembled.

Now, they are producing the face shields in only 90 seconds using die-cutting (cutting chosen shapes from low-strength materials), as opposed to 3D-printing them which takes up to 90 minutes.

“We are also working with the Wits’ UK representative looking at possible collaborations with the University of Edinburgh who responded similarly to Wits in the face shield provision to healthcare workers. We are sharing our stories with the aim of learning from their mass production process that we could emulate,” Phohole tells FORBES AFRICA.

This pandemic could very well see innovation going from Africa to the rest of the world.

Another example is Fablab Rwanda, a space for members to turn innovative ideas into products specifically in the hardware and electronics domain based in Kigali, that has produced 3,500 face shields so far as the entry point for personal protective equipment, especially for health workers, and is now working on producing low-cost ventilators in Rwanda.

A manufacturer of industrial robots, YASKAWA, in South Africa, for many years, has been looking into a crystal ball believing robots would come handy at such a time.

“Future-oriented solutions won’t merely be an option, but an absolute necessity,” they say.

Robotics and automation technology are already playing a pivotal role in the health sector; from the use of automated laboratory tests to autonomous disinfectors utilized in hospitals, but they’re about to extend further into other industries faster than anyone could have anticipated.

The global Japanese manufacturer’s southern African branch has already installed over 2,500 robots in the automotive, manufacturing and packaging industries. Decades ago, YASKAWA proposed the innovative concept of an unmanned factory termed ‘Mechatronics’. Since then, the concept has evolved into ‘i3-Mechatronics’, featuring further advancements and implementation of automation through the management of digital data.

“The fast-moving consumer goods and food markets, however, should see an increase and acceptance in the usage of robots and automation technologies... And this is where robotics could come in to reduce contact and cross-contamination,” says Kurt Rosenberg, Managing Director of YASKAWA Southern Africa.

Covid-19 is birthing a new era of health-focused robots and tech to be used in all spheres of life.

Rosenberg believes a robot-powered workforce is the way to the future, both locally and internationally.

And there are more such examples of blue sky thinking.

In South Africa, construction company Profica has partnered with ‘temporary infrastructure specialists’ Chattels to construct temporary



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Our South African government has been exemplary in its response to Covid-19... We have to pick up the pieces and work hard together to rebuild our economy; more support for small business who are job creators, more support for the township economy which will be hit the hardest. As hard as it seems, it is not insurmountable with hard work and collaboration across the board.”

– Dr Judy Dlamini, Executive Chairman, Mbekani Group, South Africa



Covid-19 triage and testing facilities.

Chattels have already constructed new temporary Covid-19 triage and potential field hospitals at Tygerberg Hospital, Victoria Hospital and Paarl Hospital in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

Meanwhile in South Africa's North West province, in Mogwase, a company called Akim Holdings Pty Ltd has designed a walk-through sanitizing unit. With an engineering company, it has created a tunnel that is practical and adjustable to suit the specifications of clients.

"Covid-19 is an introduction to a world hygiene awareness program that many have not been practicing or have partially practiced. The sanitizer tunnel was created with health risks involved especially for hypersensitive individuals and to also accommodate the disabled and parents with prams, providing a ramp and sprayers that release 5-10ml of sanitizer per person," says Thuli Mabebo, one of the directors of Akim.

Corona contact-tracing is also an area where technology and manpower meet.

According to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Maryland in the United States (US), contact-tracing is key to reopening the economy.

The world's tech giants Apple and Google have joined forces to unveil plans to build contact-tracing technology with the potential to cover the vast majority of smartphones currently in use across the world. In a joint statement, the companies explained they will develop technology-enabling governments and public health agencies to develop apps to track the pandemic, "with user privacy and security central to the design". They have decided to refer to it as "exposure notification".

Closer home, one of the entrepreneurs working on a contact-tracing device app is 2020 FORBES AFRICA 30 Under 30 list-maker, Olajumoke Oduwule, with her company KJK Africa in Nigeria. The 'DISTANCING App' ensures the user can observe a six-foot distance

with others to control the spread of infectious diseases.

2018 FORBES AFRICA 30 Under 30 list-maker Roger Boniface has been working alongside architects, 3D-printers and branding specialists to build automated wash-bins. Called Geza Wash, they are cost-effective mobile wash-bins that can service large numbers of people. Boniface plans to install these in high-density areas such as taxi ranks and plans to see "42,000 hands washed within the first 10 days".

Communications solutions provider, Liquid Telecom, is also coming up with digital solutions for Africa during the pandemic. It has provided solutions for remote learning at Kibabii virtual school in Kenya, established Covid-19 toll-free helplines in Zimbabwe, and provided better connectivity across the East African Community.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in South Africa is also pushing the boundaries of innovation, using an app developed for

Above (left): A temporary Covid-19 triage constructed by Profica and Chattels
Above (right): A prototype of what the Geza Wash looks like, developed by Roger Boniface and architects



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90% of the small businesses went from trading on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis, to zero.

– Mashudu Modau

rhino poaching to tackle Covid-19. Cmore allows rangers to use their cellphones to track poaching incidents, sightings, carcass locations, or to track rangers out on patrol. Now, it is being used to record screening data and assist in tracking potential coronavirus cases.

“Community health workers have to enter information on a cellphone and, when they press submit, the cellphone sends a location – not just to the person that has been screened – and that location pins itself on the screen at the CSIR, so we know where we have covered the country with our screens,” says Salim Abdool Karim, chairperson of the Covid-19 ministerial advisory group, during an event just before the lockdown at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

As cases spike in South Africa, Evolutio, an African company whose cloud solutions include BSS/OSS and CRM, has developed artificial intelligence (AI)-powered Covid-19 screening software that will allow the system to identify Covid-19, pneumonia and tuberculosis on chest x-rays, or a photo of the x-ray, in the absence or presence of pathological findings. “Our results from reading thousands of x-rays has showed that the system can achieve an accuracy comparable to radiologists, above 90% sensitivity and above 80% specificity across conditions,” says Evolutio’s co-founder Sunil Menon. However, he says the regulatory authorities have not responded to most Covid-19-related initiatives so they have faced challenges with any local traction.

This is an issue encountered by most innovative players in the fray. Some local manufacturers of Covid-19 test kits claim the regulatory authorities are stifling the distribution and export of kits despite massive demand globally. It will take a while before legislation can approve certain home-based innovations; as a result, it is global innovations that seem to be thriving in Africa.

An ad hoc team of engineers and doctors from the MIT Emergency Ventilator (E-Vent) Project, has developed a low-cost, open-source alternative of ventilators to assist hospitals across the world facing shortages. The goal of the project has been to find a way to automate resuscitator bags using mechanical paddles that continuously, precisely and gently squeeze the sides of the bag. Instead of relying on someone’s hands to manipulate the bag and deliver oxygen, the idea is that this device could do it automatically, and act as a long-term ventilator.

‘A GAME OF SURVIVAL, NOT GROWTH’

Small businesses all over the world are succumbing to the pandemic.

Latest research from fintech group Yoco shows small business revenues in South Africa have plunged over 84% in the pandemic.

“This pandemic has been the ultimate disruptor,” says Mashudu Modau, an entrepreneurship enthusiast and founder of Founders Sauce. Formally working as the community and partnerships manager at Yoco, he was one of many retrenched globally in the pandemic.

“[Covid-19] reduced the number of small businesses that were trading by 90%,” says Modau. “This meant 90% of the small businesses went from trading on a monthly, weekly, or daily basis, to zero.”

Many small businesses operating in Africa already face challenges such as not being registered, lack of resources or lack of funding and as a result, the lockdown has crippled the SMME economy.

“Informal economy businesses were completely wiped out, where they could not trade at all and those that were left operating could not trade at a significant level,” he adds.

Only essential workers or businesses deemed essential services could operate during the lockdown in South Africa. As a result, many businesses are relying on digital platforms to survive if they can afford it, and if lucky, with a client base still consuming their



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Our group’s main investment is within the agricultural sector. Fortunately, this sector has been allowed to operate uninterrupted in these difficult times. The challenge we have is trying to get our finished product into the market. However, immediately after the lockdown restrictions are lifted, we hope to be able to reactivate our distribution systems and reintroduce our products into the market, particularly the branded items, with an aggressive marketing strategy. Our hotels in the leisure industry have suffered considerably and we have had to close down our operations and send the staff on leave and utilize the services of those returning to work for extensive rehabilitation and maintenance of the properties... Our operations model for the leisure business such as safari lodges, will have to change considerably to ensure our clients’ safety and social distancing. This is likely to reduce occupancy and possibly result in slightly higher charges to accord a more private individual experience.”

– Mayur Madhvani, Joint Managing Director, The Madhvani Group, Uganda

products. Most have had to come up with new ideas. Like startup Granadilla which went from swimwear to grocery delivery in weeks. South African brand Tshepo Jeans, known for denim clothing, quickly pivoted to producing fashionable denim masks. Falke, a South African company once known as a sock manufacturing company, has now turned towards manufacturing face masks from its facility in Pretoria.

With hospitals around the world facing shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), businesses have stepped up. Nike, for example, has manufactured full face shields and powered, air-purifying respirator (PAPR) lenses to protect against the virus, while the Prada group has started the production of 80,000 medical overalls and 110,000 masks to be allocated to healthcare personnel. Food and beverage company Nestlé is contributing masks and other PPE to frontline workers. It's also donating medical equipment to hospitals in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal. Additionally, in Burkina Faso, it will donate three ventilators, for use in intensive care units.

The lockdown regulations have also grounded the construction sector.

Siphelele Mngaza, the Founder and CEO of Hannah Properties in South Africa, had to curtail operations, resulting in many clients pulling out of contracts. However, this has made him rethink his building strategy, especially in crowded areas.

"Social distancing and self-quarantine is almost impossible because shacks can [heat] up to about 50 degrees in summer and be really cold in winter with no electricity and no water," he says. The key then is how to build better cities suitable for everyone.

He emphasizes the importance of having smoother surfaces, greener buildings that incorporate plants, better ventilation and access to natural light. "[Post the pandemic] I envision healthier buildings that behave like plants," says Mngaza.

On the other side of the spectrum, businesses operating in the digital space have seen a boom at this time. Twenty-eight-year-old entrepreneur Cleo Johnson has taken full advantage of this. She is the founder of Nucleo, a hospitality and marketing consultancy in South Africa. With clients based in Africa and overseas, she has been able to put together post-



Blue Camel Energy

Leading The Country To Energy Self-Sufficiency



Bringing About A Solar Revolution For Nigeria

Providing brilliant and cost-efficient solutions for power and employment.

Blue Camel Energy has established itself as a market leader in the renewable energy sector of Nigeria and is committed to provide Africa with uninterrupted, cost-effective and eco-friendly power through innovative turnkey renewable energy solutions. The company designs and integrates solutions that cut across all levels of energy demand, ranging from urban and rural solar home systems to industrial power back-up solutions.

In accordance with the company's long-standing dedication to the provision of innovative solutions, Blue Camel Energy partners with prominent energy establishment such as IRENA, ECREE and many others. Blue Camel Energy's impressive roster of clients includes UNDP, Oxfam International, FHI360, GIZ, Sterling Bank Plc., Unity Bank Plc., Energy Commission of Nigeria and EFCC, as well as real estate developers and state governments across Nigeria.

Among the company's recent achievements, Blue Camel Energy is proud of having built the first totally off-grid estate in Nigeria located in Abuja. The company also built the first totally off-grid plaza as well as an off-grid filling station in Nigeria. In partnership with Nigeria's financial institutions, Blue Camel Energy has developed an innovative,

self-sustaining off grid solar powered kiosk used as a platform in rapidly increasing financial inclusion in rural communities in Nigeria, in addition to providing cost effective solar powered systems to more than 100 ATM machines across the country.

Blue Camel Energy has established a Training Centre located at the heart of the Kakuri industrial layout, in Kaduna state. Since its establishment, the facility has trained more than 180 engineering graduates. The company also delivered summer classes to secondary school students in Kaduna and Abuja to enlighten them on the effects of climate change and the global action needed to mitigate the phenomenon by increasing reliance on renewable energies.

The team at Blue Camel Energy remains steadfast in realising the company's vision of becoming Africa's market leader in the production and distribution of grid- tied and off-grid renewable energy solutions. The company is strongly committed to helping Africa achieve the SDGs set by the United Nations, as well as global commitments against climate change. To these ends, the company supports the NDCs to reduce carbon emissions and build sustainable cities and communities by providing clean and affordable energy. 🌱

corona marketing plans remotely.

“The big thing is, ‘what is your business going to look like post corona?’ Because it is not going to be the same,” she tells FORBES AFRICA. She remains optimistic.

“As a business owner, taking care of yourself mentally is extremely important as it also gives you clarity on a way forward. There is time now to refine your business, your growth strategy and how you can scale your business.”

Those that grab the opportunities or gaps in this pandemic stand a better chance of surviving because if a small business does not receive any revenue within 30 days, it may die, says Modau.

“Right now, it’s a game of survival, not necessarily growth,” he adds.

WHERE AFRICA STANDS IN HEALTHCARE

In Zimbabwe, Dr Masimba Dean Ndoro is a medical doctor on the frontline, working in the country’s Parirenyatwa Group of Hospitals. Wearing his white coat and stethoscope, every day, Ndoro prepares himself for the worst.

“Zimbabwe is in the midst of a crisis knowing exactly that its healthcare system is dilapidated,” he tells FORBES AFRICA. He says Zimbabwe was not ready for the devastation wreaked by Covid-19 on its economy and people. “The fact that there is limited supply of hospital equipment in our institutions, especially in this part of the globe, has had a negative effect on our motivation to report for work.”

March 20 marked the first confirmed case of the virus in Zimbabwe, when a 38-year-old man arrived at his home in Victoria Falls after a trip to Manchester in the UK.

By the end of April, there were 29 confirmed cases and four deaths, a small number compared to neighboring South Africa, but with huge repercussions nevertheless.

With Zimbabwe’s economy on its knees and socioeconomic problems lingering, healthcare in the country was already in dire straits. In an effort to curb the virus, the country was put on lockdown.

Coronavirus testing rolled out. But Ndoro believes this is not enough.



“

Zimbabwe is in the midst of a crisis knowing exactly that its healthcare system is dilapidated... The fact that there is limited supply of hospital equipment in our institutions, especially in this part of the globe, has had a negative effect on our motivation to report for work.

– Dr Masimba Dean Ndoro



“There has been an outcry for the need to decentralize centers for testing so we reach containment faster. It’s so unfortunate relevant authorities are lagging behind,” he laments.

In Malawi too, efforts to curb the virus have been challenging. The nation is divided. Since the first case of the virus hit headlines in the country on April 2, it was met with skepticism by many in a nation not used to epidemics.

For a country that recently nullified its 2020 elections, the public’s trust in the government also reportedly declined. Being told to stay at home and stop business because of an invisible opponent was the least of many citizens’ worries amidst the political instability.

By April 7, the country had recorded its first Covid-19 death. Panic ensued, and the president declared a national disaster. Part of the nation

Photo supplied; Photo by JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP via Getty Images

began practicing social distancing despite the Malawi High Court putting in an injunction against the notion of a 21-day lockdown.

On May 5, thousands in Malawi took to the streets in support of the opposition party alliance as they submitted their presidential candidate nomination in Blantyre. It was a sea of red.

“It’s like all they care about is to vote, then start the fight against Covid-19,” a Malawian citizen tells FORBES AFRICA. He watched the crowds chant and dance. “The pandemic is here, and it is real. But we Malawians, we are taking it for granted,” says another to us.

Amid all the chaos, one of the many at the helm in the fight against the virus in Malawi is Dr Titus Divala, a medical doctor and epidemiologist.

Operating from the southern part of the country in the city of Blantyre, he works for the University College of Medicine focusing on malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis, but now, is also part of the national committee leading efforts surrounding the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“One thing I have learned as a medical doctor and epidemiologist, I never thought I would come across something that consumes my every thought,” he tells FORBES AFRICA.

“For countries like ours, where we are sort of struggling to get hold of every case, what will happen is the virus will spread widely to most of the population and then at some point, it may not be able to move

forward because most of the population is already infected. This is a point we call ‘herd immunity’.”

However, there is one key advantage Malawi and other African countries may have over Covid-19 and that is a young population. It is quite possible the risk of death is slightly lower than that of an older European or American population. However, according to Divala, if a vaccine is found, it may take long to reach African countries due to political and economic challenges.

Further up the continent, in Nigeria, Dr Nneka Mobisson, provides healthcare support for her clients digitally.

“I realized that we as Africans were not willing to take ownership of fixing our healthcare systems. We all have a role to play in ensuring the health and happiness of Africa and I hope everyone is willing to take on that responsibility in the post-Covid world,” she tells FORBES AFRICA.

She is the co-founder and CEO of mDoc, a social enterprise that integrates methodologies in quality improvement and behavioral science with web and mobile-based technology to optimize the end-to-end care experience for people living with chronic illnesses. At this time, her patients are most at risk.

In the first week of April, Mobisson lost an acquaintance to Covid-19. “She had been at the Yale School of Public Health when I was there for medical school and was my best friend’s close friend. She was such a champion for public health in the US, a 45-year-old mother of three, so it just hit too close to home,” says Mobisson, who also knows more friends who have tested positive for the disease. She and her team have been working 24/7 to combat the virus – digitally.

Very few healthcare entities have the ability to provide virtual care and at such a time, it puts Mobisson at an advantage.

“We have a responsibility to protect the vulnerable, and we have been knee-deep supporting our members, the general population and health workers with Covid-19 support. We have shut down all our in-person hubs but have ramped up all virtual care support,” she says.

They have built a center locator called Navihealth which helps to reduce the burden of overwhelmed and insufficient hospital systems in the country. Digitally, they have been able to reach thousands.



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To cushion the economic impact of the pandemic, the government of Rwanda has rolled out a number of temporary policies (monetary and fiscal, including tax relief-measures) to support businesses through this period of disruption. For example, in order to provide more liquidity to the banking sector, the Central Bank lowered the Reserve Ratio from 5% to 4%, introduced an Extended Lending Facility for banks over a 3, 6 and 12 months’ tenor as well as established measures to rediscount bonds over a 15-day rather than 30-day period and at market value as opposed to the 3% discount... We have seen many exciting innovative responses from Rwandan entrepreneurs that have clearly demonstrated their great capacity to adapt and innovate for emerging situations.”

– Clare Akamanzi, CEO, Rwanda Development Board

However, Mobisson says it has not been easy with funding and resources being limited.

“Most of our team is located in Lagos and electricity is not constant which makes the reality of providing 24/7 guidance to people challenging. We fortunately have a redundancy system when generators or fuel are not available but it certainly makes things very expensive.”

WHAT ABOUT OTHER DISEASES?

As governments, hospitals and organizations shift all focus to Covid-19, burdening existing healthcare systems, where does it leave patients with other conditions needing critical care?

“Other diseases are suffering now,” says Dr Herbert Longwe, a lab director at ICAP at Columbia University in Pretoria, South Africa.

Liam Klassen, a 19-year-old from South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal province, experienced this first-hand. After discovering that flesh-eating bacteria had entered a wound in his leg, he was admitted to a hospital 45km away from home. The staff, he says, were too preoccupied treating Covid-19 patients.

“It was very intense being in hospital, with nurses and doctors, and they really wanted me to get out of the hospital as soon as possible. And my wound was very severe,” he says. Anxiety levels remained high for the family as they

were not allowed at the hospital due to regulations, what’s worse; they say they

‘Help Healthcare Systems In The Early Days Of Disease’

A preliminary screening test app from the Philippines that can help individuals and healthcare systems diagnose Covid-19 symptoms sooner – and in a safer way.

BY BUSI LETHOLE

LARS JEPPESEN, THE CEO AND CO-Founder of Enadoc, a tech company based in Manila in the Philippines, and Wasantha Weerakoone, its CTO and Co-Founder, have always been passionate about healthcare. Although running Enadoc, which they co-founded in 2017 with technology solutions integrator Tech One Global, in the Covid-19 pandemic, Jeppesen says they saw an opportunity to not only make a difference, but also “expand the bandwidth and depth” of their services. Enadoc has now developed a screening test app that individuals can use at home, while healthcare institutions can use it on people who have developed symptoms of Covid-19. The Denmark-born entrepreneur shares more:

HOW DID THE COVID-19 SCREENING TEST APPLICATION COME ABOUT?

In emerging economies and markets, even big countries like the US and many European countries, the number of doctors per person is limited... Now, we have a virus that has been spreading since November and if the doctor would have been some kind of AI in the background, maybe this data could have been available earlier saying ‘ok, we have some abnormal amount of people who are having the same symptoms, what is happening here?’ But because each doctor in each country, district and village deals with their own situation differently, all of us have our basic education but how do we keep ourselves up-to-date all the time with the latest? So it was always in my head ‘what can we do in this situation to bring more healthcare to more people, and help the healthcare systems in the early days of the disease to screen people or to help diagnose better?’

I think the diagnosis could be done more and more by AI sitting behind some application. And maybe with some telemedicine in between... Because of that, doctors can deal with more patients in a day and don’t need to deal with patients that could be contagious. The first paralyzing situation in the healthcare system was so many doctors and nurses got sick in the early



Weerakoone and Jeppesen

days because they didn’t know what they were dealing with. So, if we had some kind of way of saying ‘ok, there’s something happening here, this patient needs to arrive in the hospital and be put in isolation before, or we need to have certain equipment to make sure we deal with this patient in a different way’, that made us think. Then you start to see the emergence of people coming up with some screening tools and we said ‘ok, maybe we could take all the information available that we could find in the World Health Organization, Department of Health, and all these different sources and put together some kind of framework to help in screening’. We did that and now the application is in data.

HOW ARE AFRICAN COUNTRIES USING THE APP?

Right now, we have seen around six or seven countries using the app in Africa including Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda. We don’t know the exact location of the user, we just know the app has been used there. We don’t know the individual user, we don’t have an IP address or any phone ID. The platform we are using for the app is Microsoft services.

One of our intentions is to bring this product together with the healthcare app from Microsoft... We bring on the global healthcare AI into the backend of the app and create a kind of an app chat bot where you can say what your symptoms are, not only for Covid-19, but for any kind of disease.

didn't receive adequate communication about what was going on.

"What has happened is, many people are focused on Covid-19 now, and skilled people who were looking at HIV, are now focusing their attention on Covid-19 and the other diseases are being abandoned," notes Longwe. His work involves doing surveys to measure the impact of HIV, the burden of the disease and the populations that have been affected. Longwe says that there has been a lack of further research and finances being put into other diseases, as a result, the coronavirus has triggered a funding crisis for NGOs when they are needed the most. "People are no longer paying more attention and putting their efforts in writing grants or research proposals on other diseases, for example, TB, HIV and malaria. The focus has dramatically shifted away from those diseases. But those diseases are still killing us. They are still a public health problem," he adds.

But on the other hand, the pandemic will expand knowledge in the public health space and grow more human resources and skills. "We are going to draw a lot of knowledge in terms of public health on disease intervention, disease prevention and disease control," says Longwe.



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The initial genome sequencing was costly and time-consuming but efforts are underway to reduce this cost and get faster turnaround time. This will allow us to help those trying to trace the transmission of the disease in South Africa and the continent.

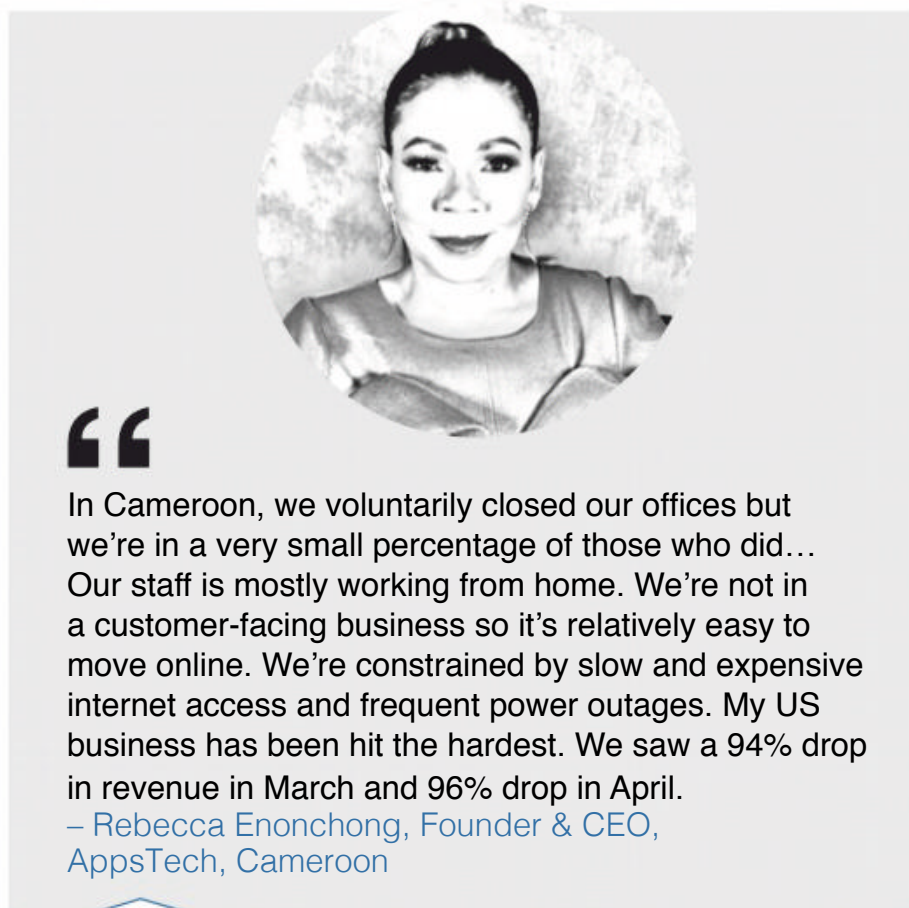
– Peter van Heusden

HUNT FOR A VACCINE

Billions of dollars are being spent globally to find a vaccine for Covid-19, but the big question is which is the most promising? According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are over 70 vaccines in the works for Covid-19, but only four of them are already being tested.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will fund the manufacturing of seven potential vaccines. But it is possible that one or two of these may be successful.

In South Africa, Peter Van Heusden, a bioinformatician



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In Cameroon, we voluntarily closed our offices but we're in a very small percentage of those who did... Our staff is mostly working from home. We're not in a customer-facing business so it's relatively easy to move online. We're constrained by slow and expensive internet access and frequent power outages. My US business has been hit the hardest. We saw a 94% drop in revenue in March and 96% drop in April.

– Rebecca Enonchong, Founder & CEO, AppsTech, Cameroon

focusing on pathogen genomics, is part of a team researching ways to understand the coronavirus. Simply put, he builds and uses software to make sense of genomic material from bacteria, parasites and viruses.

Together with Dr Mushal Allam, a graduate of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and other scientists, they immediately got to work researching the virus in January this year. "My role has been in sequence analysis, that is taking the data from the sequencing process and trying to clean it up and make sense of it, both for this single SARS-CoV-2 genome and to understand the genome in the context of other SARS-CoV-2

genomes worldwide (collected on the GISAID portal)," Van Heusden says.

This work is a breakthrough in understanding Covid-19 in South Africa in the context of the global pandemic. "The initial genome sequencing was costly and time-consuming but efforts are underway to reduce this cost and get faster turnaround time. This will allow us to help those trying to trace the transmission of the disease in South Africa and the continent," he says. This research will also help in understanding the global diversity of Covid-19 and note any significant changes in the virus.

Madagascar has reportedly found a cure for Covid-19 in an artemisia-based tonic that's subject to more trials.

Other options being explored globally to treat Covid-19 include new drugs specifically designed to target SARS-CoV-2, as well as repurposed drugs designed to treat a different disease.

One of the oldest treatments being tested, is convalescent plasma. This involves using blood plasma from people who have recovered from Covid-19 and infusing it into patients presenting the disease.

In Pakistan and India, it was reported that Covid-19 patients recovered through this method, although it's contested.

In short, it's all hands on deck as countries and corporates come together to find ways to alleviate the disease.

REBUILDING THE WORLD

It's hard to imagine what the world may look like by the end of the year. From healthcare, to retail, media, travel and education, it will no longer be business as usual. Experts are already coming up with strategies to entirely rebuild nations.

"I hope that in the post-Covid or Covid world, we are willing to invest in primary care systems, non-siloed care that focuses on building awareness and health literacy and one that invests in educating, retaining and supporting our healthcare workers at all levels of the system," says Mobisson.

Sanitizing, social distancing and mask-wearing are the expected new norms, along with remote working and e-learning. Van Heusden fears the worst in a post-corona society. "I fear there will be a lot of trauma. How we deal with that will define the post-Covid-19 world. We might turn inwards and



“Suddenly, and not unexpectedly, gender and social inequalities that have plagued the world before the pandemic have been brought to the fore. While the pandemic does not discriminate between the male and female gender, there is no denying that women and girls are suffering the bluntest edges of the pandemic.”

– Dr Jennifer Riria, Group CEO, Echo Network Africa; Founding member, Kenya Women Finance Trust



focus on blame and recriminations. Or we might draw on new awareness of how interconnected we all are and draw strength from that," he says. In a tweet, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa says "the reality is that we are sailing in uncharted waters. There is still a great deal about the epidemiology of the virus that is unknown. It is better to err on the side of caution than to pay the devastating price of a lapse in judgement."

We are living a textbook example of history as it's being made, amid uncertainty that will likely not go away for long. The moot question is: will we all live to tell the tale of a pre-and-post Covid-19 world? Only science can answer that. 

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

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FAST VIRUS. S L O W GROWTH.

Ghana and Nigeria brace for the economic nightmare ahead, even as the region's billionaires, entrepreneurs and innovators chip in for the fight against Covid-19.

BY PEACE HYDE

THE LABADI BEACH HOTEL, SET AMIDST landscaped tropical gardens in the heart of Accra, is unusually quiet on the Tuesday morning FORBES AFRICA visits in mid-March. The usual bustle of the morning breakfast buffet frequented by the city's elite has all but disappeared, and in its place, an air of uncertainty about the future of one of Accra's longest-running hotels, at least in the interim.

You cannot enter without going through the new mandatory protocols in place: hand-sanitizers, individual temperature screenings and metal detectors.

"Unfortunately, we are no longer accepting outside guests and the hotel will be closing until further notice," says the bartender. The usually-packed lobby has only two in-house guests already scheduled to leave the hotel.

Ghana's thriving hospitality industry was one of the first victims of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, once President Nana Akufo-Addo banned mass gatherings and ordered the closure of airports. Hotels in the Greater Accra region closed down, sending thousands of workers home, and leaving management to contend with the challenge of paying salaries and taxes sans customers.

It's in stark contrast to 2019, when Ghana's international PR campaign, *The Year of Return 2019*, brought in an additional 237,000 visitors representing an estimated \$1.9 billion into the economy, according to Barbara Oteng Gyasi, Ghana's Minister of

Tourism. Most of the money was spent on the hospitality sector with the average spend per tourist estimated to be around \$2,590.

And now, with the slow demise of the hospitality sector, a host of ancillary services are also feeling the pinch. Rashad McCrorey is the founder of Africa Cross Culture, a travel company that helps African-Americans reconnect to their roots by visiting countries on the African continent. He was one of those seduced by Ghana's call to reconnect with the continent on the 400th anniversary of slaves landing in the United States, and so he arrived in Ghana with the goal of promoting his tourism business.

Ghana imposed a lockdown on movement in its two largest cities, Accra and Kumasi, from March 30, and effected a travel ban on people traveling from countries overseas with cases of Covid-19. In addition, the United States (US) State Department advised its citizens to return home immediately or face staying abroad for an indefinite period. "I was shocked. My initial thoughts were fear and panic. I was seeing all the development in the US, and New York has the highest amount of cases. The National Guard and US army had been deployed in the streets and my home was basically ground zero for the deadly virus," says McCrorey.

After weighing his options, he made the decision to stay on in Ghana instead of returning home.

"At the time, ticket prices surged from \$500 to about \$6,000 and I was scared of exposing myself more to the virus. Also, going back meant that I risked spending the pre-paid money of



my customers and that was also not ideal,” says McCrorey.

Gregory Lamptey, the founder of Black Cab, a logistics company providing transportation services to customers and businesses in Accra, is facing a similar conundrum. “Business has all but stopped since the lockdown in Ghana last week. I do not think we will be able to make it to the end of the year and I have had to start looking at other alternatives to make ends meet,” he rues.

In Ghana, there were 4,700 confirmed cases with 22 deaths as of May 12. Ghana has undertaken 160,501 tests since the outbreak as of this date, a figure the president lauded as the highest per million people than any other country in Africa.

But as elsewhere on the continent, it’s the workers in the informal sector that are most at risk.

“They face a very difficult choice: keep going to work and risk contracting or spreading the virus, or stay at home and risk their family starving” observes Nana Kwame Bediako, the founder of Kwarleyz Group, an umbrella company which encompasses Wonda World Estates and Petronia City Development that has designed and developed over 500 residential and retail units in Ghana. The

company is currently negotiating to pledge one of its premier properties, Number 1 Oxford Street, five-star luxury serviced apartments, as a quarantine location, isolation center, temporary hospital or safe place for nurses, doctors and other medical personnel should the need arise.

“This is the most challenging economic downturn globally,” says Franklin Cudjoe, President of Imani-Africa, a leading think-tank in Ghana. “This is going to affect businesses all over the world in a much more significant way than ever before.”

This was perhaps the rationale behind Ghana easing its lockdown restrictions in less than a month to allow people to return to work. There is, however, still a ban on public gatherings and a national requirement for face masks to be worn by everyone.

But Kwame Ofori, a financial analyst with the Ghana Stock Exchange, is currently on the fence on how the Ghanaian economy will recover.

“Everything depends on how long this period lasts, but if it goes on for a long time, it’s going to be a big financial and economic crisis for Ghana. Most businesses in Ghana cannot realistically afford a lockdown,” avers Ofori.

It is within this context that Ken Ofori-Atta,

Ghana's Minister of Finance, said in a *Financial Times* interview that Africa has reached a "break the glass moment".

Through a partnership between the ministers of finance and economic planning on March 30, a series of strategies were outlined, which includes fiscal measures to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic including the Coronavirus Alleviation Programme. Consequently, the government estimates of the immediate impact of Covid-19 is a decline in GDP growth from a projected 6.8% to 2.6%.

Along the pristine coastline of the Labadi Beach, sits a five-storey apartment complex boasting beautiful ocean views, underground parking for tenants, a gymnasium, two restaurants and a supermarket. The developer, Kofi Appiah, is a British-Ghanaian architect who relocated to Ghana two years ago.

"I started building and selling a couple of years ago in Ghana and things were great. Right now, we cannot even get anyone to come and look at our developments. I have had to lay off the entire sales team and we are now depending on social media to attract buyers," says Appiah.

"Buyers need to imagine themselves living in the apartments and this is very difficult to imagine with just videos and pictures on Instagram. I don't imagine we are going to be selling any of these units at least for the next six months."

About 40 minutes from Ghana, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is also battenning down the hatches. With plunging oil prices caused by the price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia, and the novel coronavirus outbreak, Nigeria is in a much more precarious economic position.

Nigerian stocks have gone through weeks of losses with the fall in oil prices from \$57 to \$30 per barrel subsequently leading to an increase in external debt and a depreciating currency. This year, Nigeria's budget stood at \$37 billion based on oil prices staying at \$57 per barrel. With the sharp decline in these prices, Nigeria cannot currently fund its budget.

"Nigeria might very well be in trouble here. Even though Parliament recently granted President Muhammadu Buhari's request for \$22.7 billion in foreign borrowing, the significant fall in global oil prices will erode any boost from this stimulus. Many analysts are of the opinion that the Nigerian naira has deteriorated markedly and remains set for a sharp fall this year if current conditions persist," says Ofori.

One of the major side-effects of this in the country is a US dollar shortage that is creeping up with the informal dollar dealers on the black market. Nigeria's official exchange rate which is fixed by the central bank, has stayed at around N360 to the dollar since the country emerged out of recession in 2017. Today, the rate is N445.

"Everyone is currently hunting for dollars and we don't have any more. Even the agents we get them from are not releasing the dollars because they believe the rates will go even higher so this is becoming a big problem," says Audu, a black-market agent.

The coronavirus is simply adding insult to injury for Nigeria's



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We all have a part to play in this global crisis.

– Tony Elumelu

economic woes. As of May 12, there are over 5,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Nigeria. The country issued a nationwide lockdown between March and April but similar to Ghana, has eased restrictions on movement to enable its 200 million population to return to work while practising social distancing.

Billionaire Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba, announced a donation of essential medical supplies to help fight the pandemic. Along with making global headlines, his actions have also galvanized other private businesses and Nigeria's most successful entrepreneurs to utilize their assets and funds for social good amid the devastating outbreak.

Tony Elumelu, Chairman of Heirs Holding and United Bank for Africa (UBA), announced N5 billion (\$12.8 million), through the UBA foundation, to kick-start a comprehensive pan-African response to the fight against the coronavirus. The donation is aimed at providing significant support to Nigeria and other African countries through the provision of critical care facilities and materials.

"I believe we all have a part to play in this global crisis and I hope that this is the time the private sector and government work together to help the most vulnerable people to battle the virus. We need to act fast and we commend the work the government is already doing to ensure we stem the spread of this global pandemic," says Elumelu.

For African countries, this virus is expected to overwhelm an already insufficient healthcare system and reverse the economic growth that many countries have been experiencing in recent years. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has revised Africa's growth, falling from 3.2% to 2%.

"We need to deal with the human crisis first before we can begin to address the economic impact of the

virus on us. I am confident we will pull through this crisis just like we have in several other adverse situations that have come before,” says Oscar Onyema, CEO of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

Nigeria’s richest woman, Folorunso Alakija, is also stepping in to help fight the pandemic. Through her Famfa Oil, one of the leading indigenous exploration and oil production companies in Nigeria, she has pledged N1 billion (\$2.56 million) to support Nigeria’s fight against Covid-19.

“These are truly difficult times for us. As the world rallies to deal with the health security, economic and social implications of the coronavirus, it is clear we feel the effects more deeply than most of the developed world. Managing a crisis of this magnitude means that the strength of our response will determine our ability to weather the storm but I believe with God, nothing is impossible,” says Alakija.

“Millions of Nigerians are under 30 and live from hand-to-mouth and quite frankly, cannot afford a lockdown. They depend on going out each day to earn a living on the streets as well as buying food from crowded markets. If this lockdown continues, there could be a mass unrest which could further cripple Nigeria,” says Idrisu Bello, a Nigerian economist.

President Buhari in an address in March ordered financial intervention schemes to be rolled out for the most vulnerable.

“This represents about 10,695,360 individuals in 35 states across the country as the poorest and most vulnerable Nigerians,” says Bello.

The Aliko Dangote Foundation (ADF) has also pledged N200 million (\$516,000) to support the current effort of the Nigerian government to fight the disease.

Zouera Youssoufou, Managing Director and CEO of ADF, says the donation is part of the foundation’s cardinal objective of partnering with governments to combat the disease.

“The Dangote Foundation has been at the forefront of helping Nigerians fight against diseases and providing economic development for Nigeria. At this very difficult time, we are committed to providing the much-needed support to help the government provide help to millions of vulnerable Nigerians,” says Youssoufou.

As corona cases continue to rise, Nigeria, along with other African countries, has also shut its airports and air travel.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimates that around 330,000 jobs and \$1.2 billion are at stake in Ethiopia’s economy, around 190,000 jobs and \$3.8 billion in South Africa’s economy, around 138,000 jobs and \$1.1 billion to Kenya’s economy and 91,000 jobs in Nigeria with \$650 million lost.

Then there is the worrying problem of medical care.

Lagos-based air ambulance and offshore medical solutions contractor Flying Doctors Nigeria, founded and run by entrepreneur Ola Brown, is calling this a true pandemic.

“Africa has to be cautious because of the challenges we have in our healthcare. There are significant deficits and a huge lack



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It is clear we feel the effects more deeply than most of the developed world.

– Folorunso Alakija

of medical and financial resources which means we face an unprecedented time ahead,” says Brown.

However, in spite of the insurmountable challenges, a number of local entrepreneurs are providing innovative solutions to help the government in its fight against the disease.

Accra-based company DTRT Apparel is gearing up to manufacture a range of personal protective equipment (PPEs) to supply Africa and the rest of the world. DTRT supplies products to major US and EU-based brands via a global network spanning three continents. The company employs over 2,000 people in West Africa, procures textiles from Asia and exports primarily to the EU and US markets.

“Now is the time for companies all over Africa to work together for the greater good of the continent. We want to do our part to ensure we are contributing to the fight against this pandemic by providing resources to the healthcare system,” says Salma Salifu, Managing Director of DTRT.

In Nigeria, Bamigbose Adams, a furniture-maker, has begun turning old metal drums into custom hand-washing basins to be sold in Lagos.

Around 157 million Nigerians lack access to proper hand-washing facilities, according to a 2018 report by WaterAid Nigeria and Adams saw this as an opportunity to innovate to survive.

“Business has been slow for a while so I was looking at different ways of making money to feed my family. I got the idea to use the drum from my local area where some people use them to store water. I created the first drum and it worked and then the publicity began to create a demand,” says Adams.

His main clients are local businesses that want a temporary solution to help combat the spread of the virus.

As governments rally to find solutions to help their economies, it is very clear that the way we live and do business will not be the same. Ever again. 🇳🇮



Start Of The Mask Economy

Even the most unconventional businesses, such as a Cape Town candy shop, are selling masks to face off the economic crisis.

BY TIANA CLINE

IN LESS THAN THREE WEEKS, PROUDLYSA'S NEWLY-launched online portal for local manufacturers of masks hit 400 sellers. Collectively, these mask-makers have the capacity to produce around 14 million masks per week, says ProudlySA's Deryn Graham, and those are only the manufacturers registered to the clothing sector's National Bargaining Council.

Masks are a necessary accessory in the fight to prevent Covid-19 from spreading and companies around the world are shifting their core operations to crank out personal protection equipment (PPE).

Besides high-end designer brands like Louis Vuitton and Chanel now making eye-catching masks, many African businesses are pivoting their core operations to keep their businesses afloat.

"I decided to make masks purely to access a new revenue stream. I had been able to sell my socks online during the first level of lockdown, but I wasn't authorized to ship them as they weren't classified 'essential goods'," explains Chelsey Wilson, FEAT. sock co.'s co-founder and designer from Cape Town. What was holding Wilson back, initially, was that she didn't want to make masks using generic, store-bought fabric.

"I wanted to keep true to my brand, which is all about bold and unique prints... I had to use custom-printed fabric I already had that made around 100 masks which all sold out in the space of three hours," says Wilson, adding that given the demand, she should be able to sell around 300 masks a week going forward.

Jinae Heyns is the co-owner of Matsidiso, an ethical footwear and accessories brand with flagship stores in Stellenbosch and De Waterkant in Cape Town. For her, making masks was not a choice, it was a matter of survival: "We didn't want to just make masks, we wanted to ensure that we were able to feed our team and do our part to support those who cannot easily afford or access proper masks."

Matsidiso currently sells around 8,000 masks a month. Elastic is in low supply countrywide and what is left is being reserved for the medical industry. Matsidiso, which operates out of a family-run dancewear factory, uses lycra for their mask ties: "I care deeply about

sustainable practices, and with masks, it's no different. We have the material in-house," adds Heyns.

Wendren Setzer from The Wren Design, a Muizenberg-based South African company that hand-makes environmentally-friendly bags and accessories using recycled cement packaging paper, had a unique challenge. With the capacity to create 1,000 masks a week, Setzer's first obstacle was developing a paper prototype.

"We wondered how we could make a face mask out of paper? Several prototypes later, we developed two unique mask patterns. We also researched coatings and found a way to coat the paper to offer more – the paper is coated with SiO₂ and a second layer of SiAgO₂ is applied making the surface anti-microbial," explains Setzer.

Although Cheaky Co traditionally sells confectionery, Lucas R Adams, its founder and Sea Point-resident in Cape Town, decided to launch two different masks into his online store.

"We've been selling weekly quantities within the hundreds," says Adams. "There's obviously been a massive spike in the production and sale of fabric face masks by those within textiles, but it soon dawned on us we hadn't yet seen anyone within the food category offering them, so we thought, 'why not add a small range for our community'? In the end, we thought that offering

the option to add a mask to one's cart when shopping our plant-based treats was a no-brainer..."

For many small businesses, the decision to make masks is the only way to potentially weather the pandemic. It's about turning non-essential production lines into essential manufacturing businesses.

According to a Stanford University study, masks are the first step in reopening the economy (and may help with transitioning into a post-Covid world).

"These business owners are not only fighting for themselves; they do what they do to a great extent to ensure the safety of their entire team and because they want to see South Africa thrive. At the end of the day, these aren't just masks, but actual protective gear that could help save a life," ends Heyns. 

“We hadn't yet seen anyone within the food category offering them...”



Partnering with others to bring breakthroughs that change patients' lives

At Pfizer, we build partnerships with social entrepreneurs and organisations in communities throughout the world, with a strong focus on strengthening local healthcare systems and building capacity, including through primary healthcare delivery. Pfizer remains a key investor of the Unjani Clinics, a network of primary healthcare clinics that are owned and operated by black female nurses in low-income areas. These clinics are focused on offering accessible, affordable and quality healthcare to South Africans who are employed but cannot afford medical aid or private healthcare practitioner rates. Patients pay a R200.00 consultation fee for each visit, which includes medicine to treat their diagnosis.

The clinics offer all basic primary healthcare services, from treating common illnesses like coughs and colds to HIV and TB screening to family planning and sexual health. One of the network's most popular services is antenatal care. Fifty-seven clinics have ultrasound machines, which were donated by The Pfizer Foundation. In the past two years 27,000 ultrasounds have been done at these facilities, which have helped prevent emergency deliveries and ensured safe pregnancies. After delivery, patients then go on to bring their babies to the clinics for postnatal care such as immunisations and check-ups.

Since 2012, the Unjani Clinic network has grown to 70 clinics in eight provinces and provided over one million patient consultations. There are plans to establish 30 more primary healthcare facilities by the end of 2020 and at least 350 by 2025. This innovative model not only helps to alleviate the burden on our government's healthcare system but also empowers nurses to own and lead the effort in transforming the healthcare system within their own communities. All clinics in the network are given business support and ongoing coaching and mentoring in order to succeed and become sustainable.

At Pfizer, we are committed to collaborating with stakeholders who share the same ideals to support and expand access to reliable, affordable healthcare to those most in need.

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Breakthroughs that
change patients' lives

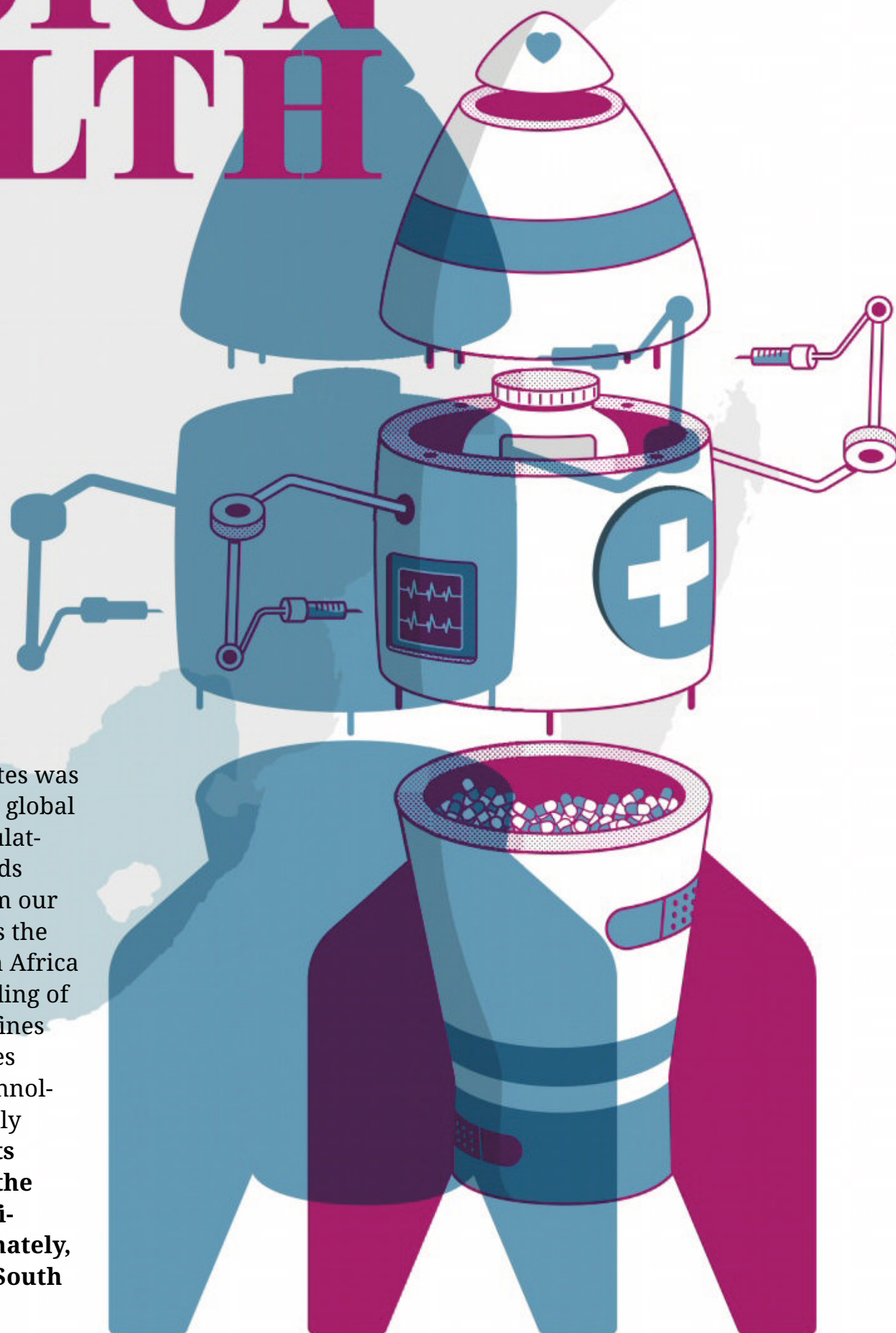


SOUTH AFRICA

MISSION HEALTH

—
“WE DIDN’T SEE THIS COMING,” WRITES BILL GATES IN LAST YEAR’S ANNUAL LETTER AS CHAIRMAN OF THE GATES FOUNDATION.
—

No, he wasn’t talking about COVID-19; Gates was referring to other surprise megatrends in global healthcare, one of the most complex, regulated and challenging sectors, which demands principled executives who can safely helm our Mission Health. Gates’ worthy list informs the 2020 edition of Executive Forecast’s South Africa report which covers a greater understanding of the true economic impact of health, redefines the catch-all term of “access,” and explores financing mechanisms, breakthrough technologies, and empowerment of the historically disadvantaged. **Mission Health highlights how we can work together to navigate the complexities in restoring investor confidence, attracting investment, and ultimately, achieving the “triple bottom line” in a South African context.**



RSA FAST FACTS — MOST RECENT FIGURES (2016), COURTESY OF THE WHO

56,015,000

TOTAL POPULATION

U\$12,240

GROSS NATIONAL
INCOME PER CAPITA (PPP)

60/67

LIFE EXPECTANCY
AT BIRTH M/F

>40

TOTAL PERCENTAGE OF
CLINICS BUILT AFTER 1994

U\$1,148

TOTAL EXPENDITURE
ON HEALTH PER CAPITA

8.8

TOTAL EXPENDITURE
ON HEALTH AS % OF GDP

STRONG HEALTH. STRONGER BUSINESS

IF WE NEEDED ANY GREATER EVIDENCE OF THE MASSIVE IMPACT OF HEALTH ON THE ECONOMY, witness the single biggest market decline since the Great Recession of 2008, sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. But the impact can also go the other way: *investing in health is always good business. South Africa's business and government communities understand that you can't invest in what you don't plan for—and you won't invest in what you don't understand.* Together, they're driving planning and greater understanding through formal and informal channels.

- “We are a proactive government and prioritize the people's needs. We are creating platforms for the private sector to participate and invest in the country.” shares **Thembi Siweya**, Deputy Minister of the Planning Department.
- “We have been pushing for investment and growth which is a critical issue in South Africa, as nothing happens without them,” says **Cas Coovadia**, Director of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA). *“It is a matter of changing the narrative and it is in our hands to do this, government, business and labor together. We need leadership that understands our role in the global economy and what needs to be done to get our economy going.”*
- **Stavros Nicolaou**, **Chairman of Pharmisa**, a South African industry trade-group stresses the importance of implementing structural reforms, and that the business community is fully



FEW PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE CONTRIBUTION THAT PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES MAKE TO HUMAN WELFARE.

DR KONJI SEBATI, CEO OF IPASA

behind **President Ramaphosa's** drive to restore governance, liquidity, and sustainability in state-run enterprises.

- **Risenga Maluleke, Statistician-General and Head of Statistics South Africa**, emphasizes the importance of knowing as much as possible about the population you're planning for. “We collect data from households, from industry, from administrative records from schools, clinics and police. Statistics must be independent, facts can be stubborn!” Maluleke asserts.

...

“There have been several initiatives championed by the President to encourage Foreign Direct Investment into the country,” says **Thulisile Manzini, CEO of Brand South Africa**. “These include the launch of the South African Investment Conference with a clear target of U\$68 billion over 5 years. Of the inaugural U\$17 billion investment, approximately U\$14 billion worth of projects are in implementation phase across different sectors. Last year's SA Investment Conference also saw an investment commitment of U\$21 billion pledges made from various investors.”

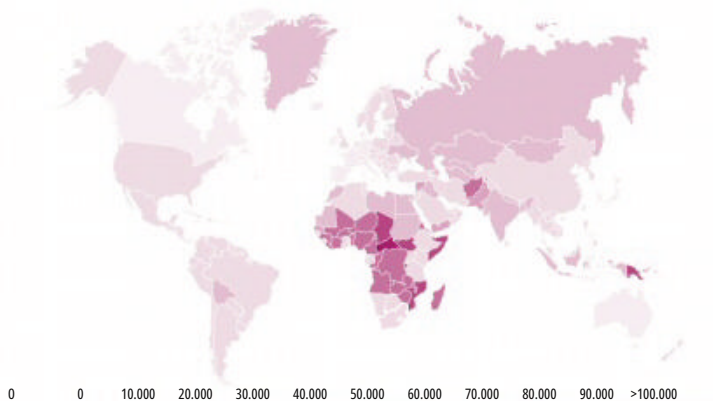
Manzini also points towards a new “One Stop Shop” concept which removes red tape for investors by providing more coordinated, streamlined, and professional services to companies, bringing together special economic zones, provincial investment agencies, local authorities, and government departments.

Talking about economic spillover, “there is a whole domino effect in coming up with innovative medicines and treating

patients,” says **Dr Konji Sebati, CEO of IPASA**, the Innovative Pharmaceutical Association of South Africa. “We create a virtuous cycle of life. Few people are aware of the contribution that pharmaceutical companies make to human welfare. Not only do their medicines save lives, it improves health, and prolongs and enhances quality of life, but medicines also reduce overall healthcare costs.”

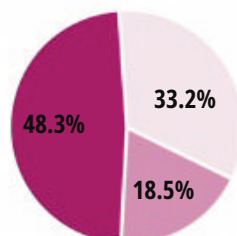
BURDEN OF DISEASE, 2017

Disability-adjusted Life Years (DALYs) per 100,000 individuals from all causes. DALYs measure the total burden of disease—both from years of life lost due to premature death and years lived with disability. One DALY equals one lost year of healthy life.

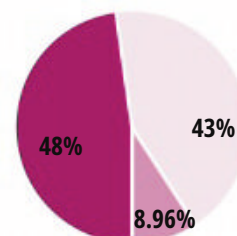


Two Countries, Two Tiers: A Closer Look at South African Healthcare

TOTAL SPENDING ON HEALTHCARE US



TOTAL SPENDING ON HEALTHCARE SOUTH AFRICA



■ Private spending on medical plans
■ Other private spending
■ Government spending

Data from 2014
Source: <https://compareguru.co.za>

SHIFTING DISEASE MAPS, SHIFTING HEALTH PLANS

Africa has historically been the epicenter of a multitude of global health initiatives. Notably the world's largest publicly-funded antiretroviral (ARV) program, increasing life expectancy by over a decade, an unprecedented achievement that has led to unprecedented business opportunities. However, partly as a result of its successes, the disease profile of the continent has been shifting—and its healthcare system along with it. South Africa must continue to develop expertise in managing both communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases, whose treatments must coexist in a fragile balance. *Through collaborative know-how and coordinated effort between public and private initiatives, people on both sides of the equation believe it's possible to re-engineer the country's healthcare system.* The National Health Insurance (NHI), is a universal health coverage scheme being implemented over a 14-year period starting in 2012.

“These types of reforms have been done before in other countries and are working well,” says **Rhulani Nhlaniki, Pfizer Cluster Lead of Sub-Saharan Africa**, echoing the general consensus among executives that the NHI is a good idea, in principle the challenge will be around funding and implementation in a market divided between public and private, with 80% of medical spending incurred by 15% of the population in the private market.

“We believe that it can work in South Africa,” Nhlaniki continues. “The reason for my optimism is that *when a system is overhauled or reformed, it presents a unique opportunity to rebuild something that is better than anything that exists.*”

The government has given Nhlaniki just cause for his optimism, doubling down on its Commitment to NHI in the budget review. Minister of Finance Tito Mboweni announced that the Treasury reprioritized U\$3 million to the Department of Health to increase its capacity in phasing in the NHI and U\$1.5 million has been set aside for the National Quality



Health Improvement Plan, a project of the Presidency to improve the quality of healthcare facilities to ensure that they can be accredited for the NHI. An additional U\$200 million will be allocated over the next three years for medical students to complete their training.”

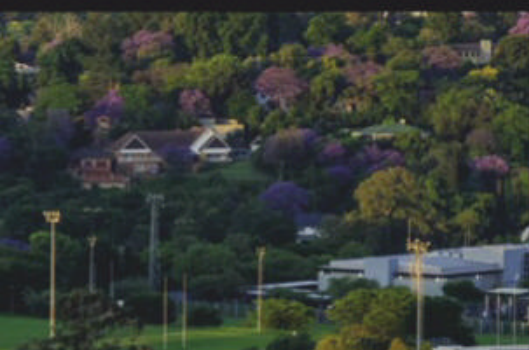
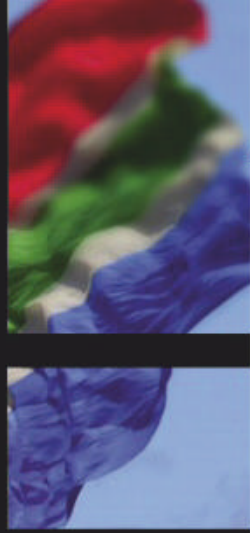
Dr. Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Health of RSA, echoes Mboweni's focus on investment with a broad appeal to “further build infrastructure where needed, looking particularly at hospitals,” and leveraging on entrepreneurs to drive innovation, which he says will be crucial to bridge the dichotomy in the system: “*On one side, it seems a first-world economy: successful, sustainable, connected, fiscally competitive with quality products; then, there is another side that has been left behind.*”

Two sides of the same coin

The disease profiles for the private and public healthcare sectors are very different. The fact remains that each system is specialized in its own treatment silos for unique disease profiles. **Dr. Ryan Noach, CEO of Discovery Health**, elaborates, “On the one hand, the private healthcare environment looks like that of a developed country's environment,” with low rates of infectious diseases, including an HIV rate below 2%, and greater chronic diseases rates. In contrast, for the public hospitals, Noach says that “HIV and TB are the predominant issues concerning the public sector, with lifestyle diseases being an important secondary cause of disease burden.”

Creating a future where disease is a thing of the past.

We are Janssen, the Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson. Bold thinkers. Big dreamers. Fearless advocates on behalf of patients. So that one day, the world's most daunting diseases will be found only in the pages of history books. Learn more at www.janssen.com.



South Africa is well on the way to becoming a globally competitive nation.

Seeking to accelerate and broaden economic and social benefits, address poverty, reduce crime and promote social cohesion by using our own competitive advantages and key positive attributes.



Inspiring new ways

REFLECTIONS FROM THE NHI CABIN

Dr. Anban Pillay, Deputy Director General for NHI reflects on the opportunities and challenges he faces.

Challenge: "Being able to provide a broad set of benefits within South Africa's resource limited market requires a highly efficient system, getting the cost of the goods as low as possible and at the same time making sure the population participates in prevention and health promotion."

Bright Side: "the benefit package designed is directly linked to the budget. Given that limitation, we can't design an NHI that is not affordable. We can roll out an ambulatory healthcare package that will be accessed by the entire population and will go a long way in providing healthcare to citizens that have no coverage at all."



NHI, Seen from the C-Suite



STAVROS NICOLAOU, CHAIRMAN OF PHARMISA:

"The South Africa healthcare scene has 2 fronts; the NHI dealing with the future of health, and the Presidential Health Compact dealing with the current issues"— a 2019 pledge committed to providing equitable access, increasing hospital and clinic capacity, and establishing well-staffed centers of excellence).



TARYN PURDON, GM OF PIERRE FABRE MEDICAL: "We need to work together in a collaborative way with a strategy for NHI. We must have a clear strategy with regards to the timing and implementation. NHI will most likely impact the providers and the hospital side first. However, NHI alone will not solve South Africa's healthcare problems. That can only be achieved through collaboration between NHI and other health services."



DR. RYAN NOACH, CEO OF DISCOVERY HEALTH: "It is an opportunity and we support a move towards Universal Healthcare. We must do something structural to change how healthcare works in South Africa and seize the opportunity in making a more robust system. We should leverage the strength of an excellent private healthcare system, not break it down. Private healthcare has been perceived as expensive in South Africa, but on a Purchasing Power Parity adjusted basis, we deliver some of the best quality healthcare that money can buy anywhere in the world."



SHELLEY HORNER, COUNTRY PRESIDENT, NOVARTIS SOUTH AFRICA: "The biggest issue is around what I call equitable healthcare. The two ends must be brought together while still allowing people to have a choice. In a democratic society, choice must not be removed."



DR. MORENA MAKHOANA, CEO, BIOVAC: "It is about evolution and adapting to that evolution. From a business perspective, we know we will always adapt to the new norm. I don't think NHI is a threat to business because these changes tend to be gradual. We will see the changes as they come and we will adapt as we go."

ACCESS A COLLECTIVE DEFINITION



“ACCESS” IS ONE OF THOSE WORDS THAT CAN MEAN EVERYTHING AND NOTHING ALL AT ONCE. IN THE SPIRIT OF CLARITY, THE TOP HEALTHCARE LEADERS WEIGHED IN ON ONE SIMPLE QUESTION: HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE “ACCESS”?



HELEN REES, BOARD CHAIR, SAHPRA: “Speaking from a regulator’s point of view, even if we have the best medicines in the world, if they are not made available to the populations that need them, they will have no impact. Our role is to ensure that the medicines in the country are safe, efficacious, high quality, and in public interest—this is what we must do, and if in executing this role we are not efficient, we become a barrier to access.”

ZWELI MKHIZE, MINISTER OF HEALTH: “Health access should not be compromised because of poverty, unemployment, or lack of medical insurance. We need to reduce what we call catastrophic payments which is the choice between either health services or buying food and household requirements.”

RHULANI NHLANIKI, PFIZER CLUSTER LEAD SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: “For somebody in the rural area it might mean the ability to get the medicine to the area, the last mile challenge.”

PRIYA AGRAWAL, MSD SA GENERAL MANAGER: “To bring the best of our medicine, to each and every person: we cannot rest until we have figured out how to bring our finest achievements to everyone.”



ERIK ROOS, CEO, PHARMA DYNAMICS: “There are two levels:
1) Patient access to quality healthcare, i.e. information and value-added programs to educate on diseases and lifestyle changes
2) Medical access, i.e. bringing new molecules to market, cost-effectiveness, clinical trials, and outcome studies.”



FRANCISCO PLAZA MUÑOZ, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF JANSSEN SOUTH AFRICA: “The first A in Access is for Availability, and then, Affordability. We have to consolidate the regulatory process and clear the backlog which has caused significant delays in access to products, an even more complex situation than affordability itself.”

BARBARA NEL, ASTRAZENECA SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY HEAD: “With the patient in mind, it means the availability of good healthcare, not just medication.”

DR. RYAN NOACH, CEO OF DISCOVERY HEALTH: “It is quality care, delivered at the right time in the healthcare journey, that is affordable to the person who needs it.”

TARYN PURDON, GM OF PIERRE FABRE MEDICAL: “Access means providing healthcare to people who previously did not have access to certain kinds of medication, but it also implies improvement of the tender process with regards to supplying medication. The running of tenders is incredibly important for providing medication to the patients.”

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B-BBEE
LEVEL
CONTRIBUTOR

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Pharmacies, More Than Just Points of Sale



“People need medicine, but it is still uncertain what the pharmacy’s role will be in an NHI environment,” says **Christo Rademan, Managing Director of Mediscor**, the company that since 2001 has been publishing the Medicines Review Report. “NHI will need to have a central system that will manage medication, whether it is government tender stock or pharmacy stock. *Building a central system that carries 60 million people is a priority, and only time will give clarity as to how the division of the provinces and districts will be done.*” Rademan expects that he can help provide some of that clarity. “We are the only company in South Africa that publishes on trends in South African medicine,” he adds. “We are a PBM (Pharmaceutical Benefit Management) company. We provide the ability for a funder to manage medicine, and provide instant access for members so they can walk into any pharmacy or any doctor without needing to pay cash. The insurance companies and funders know that any member can be attended to in a pharmacy or by a doctor, and the medicines would be supplied and funded electronically with no cash

needed. Our role is double-fold: on one side we provide access, and on the other side, the management capability at the back end.” Essential to these capabilities are the operational efficiencies that underpin them. **Michael Springer, Managing Director of PBSA**, says that automation solutions like the Gollmann Automated Dispensing Unit (ADU) that his company provides “are desperately needed in the pharmacy space, given the massive challenges that need to be addressed, e.g. the amount of time taken to dispense medicine, managing stock. Recently, a prominent pharmacy was in the news for dispensing expired medication—an indication that the monitoring of expiry dates is another pain point that needs to be adequately dealt with.”

Fortunately, Springer adds, *“the Gollmann ADU system completely eliminates dispensing errors, while speeding up the process of dispensing medication, from start to finish.”*

HEALTH TRANSFORMERS: AGILITY & INNOVATION

“We want to be known as best-in-class because of our agility and innovation,” says **Erika Koppers, former GM of Takeda South Africa**. She cites an exciting pipeline of 12 new molecules through 2024, across rare diseases, oncology, neuroscience, and gastroenterology. “We also make targeted R&D investments in plasma-derived therapies and vaccines,” Koppers explains. “Our currently marketed 14 global growth brands present a great window of opportunity for ICMEA, the Growth & Emerging Markets Business Unit at Takeda. Additionally, *we’re initiating the development of an anti-SARS-CoV-2 polyclonal hyperimmune globulin (H-IG) to treat high-risk individuals with COVID-19, while also studying whether our currently marketed and pipeline products may be effective treatments for infected patients.*”

As a leader with more than 75 years of experience in the development of plasma-derived products, it is Koppers’ hope—along with the rest of the world—that Takeda has the expertise to research, develop, and manufacture a potential vaccine. She says, “We have identified relevant assets and capabilities across the company and are hopeful that we can expand the treatment options for patients with COVID-19 and the providers caring for them.”



Patient Journey: From A to Z to AZ

Barbara Nel, Country President of AstraZeneca, is optimistic that the widespread use of mobile phones in Africa creates a great opportunity to increase access and reach. “We are working with an extremely young population, where everybody has a device,” she says. “Using digitization to ease the patient’s journey is an opportunity that we must respond to as an industry. A good example of digitization at the rural pharmacy level is virtual consultation—telemedicine.”

Nel cites the example of a patient complaining to a pharmacist about a chesty cough. The pharmacist uses an app to guide the patient through screening questions and then decides if there is a potential asthma-related complaint for which further a doctor consultation is required.

“With digitization we can streamline and link all the different phases of the patient journey, from the pharmacy, to the GP, to the specialist referral,” Nel explains. “This provides valuable feedback which informs decisions and guidelines that can shorten and ease the patient journey.”

Her company, AstraZeneca, is already working with partners to implement programs on prevention, treatment, and management of diseases across Africa. “An example is the app for diabetes patients for whom adherence to treatment is critical,” she says. “The app supports the patient in their treatment management and provides access to relevant information on the management of their illness, as well as access to a dietitian or a nurse, who checks in on their treatment management, and provides support.”

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Healthy Heart Africa is AstraZeneca's signature commitment to healthcare access: an innovative and sustainable programme that aims to improve the lives of hypertensive patients across Africa.

In South Africa, AstraZeneca is partnering with the National Department of Health to deliver a National Hypertension Screening Programme to focus on early detection and diagnosis.

Our Phakamisa Programme brings together organisations to help raise awareness of Non-Communicable Diseases, and improve health outcomes for patients in South Africa, with a current focus on Breast and Prostate Cancer.

Working together with a broad range of partners we are implementing effective programmes that focus on prevention, treatment and management of diseases across Africa.

At AstraZeneca - our vision of tomorrow inspires our actions of today.



Activity ID: ZA-2022

Triple Bottom Line: Profit, People, Planet



A recent phrase encompassing profit, people, and planet, and planet in a more enlightened view of capitalism.

"In order for a business to sustain its growth, it must be profitable," says **David Gibbons, General Manager of Roche**. "And that is vital for any business," he adds, underscoring the fact that in the "Triple Bottom Line" without profit, it's challenging to move beyond to the other two priorities. Roche has championed this balance by doing its part: "2019 marks 25 years that Roche has collaborated with Transnet to ensure primary healthcare and disease awareness are brought to remote communities that otherwise do not have access to such facilities," says Gibbons, referring to the *"Phelophepa healthcare train," a free, mobile healthcare clinic that travels to areas of rural South Africa where there is just one doctor for every 5,000 patients*—and in doing so has been recognized as one of South Africa's greatest Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, proof that companies can indeed "do well by doing good."

"Roche is leading the way to Personalized Healthcare with the aim of ensuring that every patient is able to receive a treatment that best suits them," adds Gibbons, and emphasizes that in this process, he expects costs to decrease for the healthcare system overall. "Gene sequencing, big data, immunotherapies, and gene therapies are all part of this mission. Our aim is to ensure that the same innovation that is brought to markets around the world also reaches the patients here in Southern Africa."

Ian Wakefield, General Manager at BD Africa, approaches the issue from a regional perspective. "Managing the triple bottom line successfully in Africa cannot be achieved from a desk," he insists. "My team, myself, and global visitors are on the ground to support the local teams, to ensure that they are not alone in this challenging environment. Unless you go out and see for yourself, you cannot impactfully make a change. There are many nuances at the country level. For example, Nigeria and Ghana are close to each other but are radically different. If your only perspective is from the desktop in Johannesburg, it's much more difficult to be successful."

Next Exit: Price

In order to control prices—and ultimately profits—while establishing transparency in the private market, the government introduced Single Exit Price (SEP) in 2004, which lists a maximum price for all prescription medicines, though dispensers, in some cases, charge an additional dispensing fee. The upshot? Companies with efficient logistics and distribution stand to gain a massive advantage.

"While the South African healthcare landscape can be difficult to navigate at times, logistics plays a key role in enabling efficiency and access for the end customers," says **Vikash Singh Managing Director of UPD**. "In light of SEP, our service in logistics differentiates us as a company. While UPD still services distribution and logistics to the Clicks Group, we have expanded to take a broader role in healthcare and today we have almost 75% market share of the public and private hospital distribution in the country."



From Price to Value — And Beyond

“We need to build a value-based healthcare system by understanding the needs of the country—it’s a different concept,” says **Francisco Plaza Muñoz, Managing Director of Janssen South Africa**. “In order to incorporate the benefits of innovation, there needs to be a balanced dialogue with relevant stakeholders on what value means, and that involves more than cost or pricing. We should be looking at the complete patient journey, at the impact on mortality and morbidity, at how side effects and costs associated can be reduced,” Muñoz says. This broader perspective includes ways for innovation to reduce or eliminate the need for second-line therapies. “Treatments can no longer be evaluated by looking exclusively at the cost of a given medication,” Muñoz clarifies. “The whole patient journey must be considered and discussed carefully with our critical stakeholders.”



Currency Risks (and Rewards)

“We don’t always need to import from first world countries at an unaffordable cost,” says **John C. Norman**, who transitioned from Takeda in 2017 to become the current **Regional Director of English-Speaking Africa for Acino**. “There is no doubt that South Africa is facing strong economic headwinds. The exchange rate is declining and over a period of time the Rand will weaken further on average. Therefore, we must not get too exposed to foreign exchange. We can do this in a number of ways: local manufacturing and local acquisitions.” Norman identifies Acino as an example of local focus resulting in better, more sustainable businesses. “We have a very localized strategy that differentiates us from other multinationals. We are a multinational, but we act as a local company as indicated by our BBBEE level 1 rating,” he says proudly. “Our business diversity allows us to balance, where if one aspect of our business is not doing well, we can shift focus. At the moment, there is an increased focus towards our medical device company as it is currently quicker to launch medical devices that are CE certified. *All of this makes us an ideal partner for multinationals that are looking for a local Pharma Company to launch their products.*”

This diversity is supported by Acino’s Mission 2020, a global initiative to think differently and transform the business. “The principles behind Mission 2020 make up our DNA,” Norman says, citing his recent challenge given to 11 teams across his organization to come up with ideas on topline, managing expenses, and improving productivity. “We live in a stressful society, so we need projects that help manage stress and keep people motivated. We have initiatives like company training days. The results are exemplary,” Norman concludes.

QUICK TIPS FROM THE TOP

Ashley Pearce is Managing Director of Adcock Ingram Pharmaceuticals, among South Africa’s largest local pharmaceutical players. He gives three quick tips on how to make the country’s healthcare more sustainable:

- 1 An agreement for local manufacturing of strategic products that consider RSA’s disease burden: ARV, cardiovascular, TB, Malaria, HIV, diabetes. There should be an agreement for 25 to 30 of the most important molecules to be manufactured locally.
- 2 Longer tender runs, preferably lasting between 5 to 8 years.
- 3 Strategic pricing for local manufacturing, with a band of 20% of the price of imported goods from China and India to incentivize more local presence.



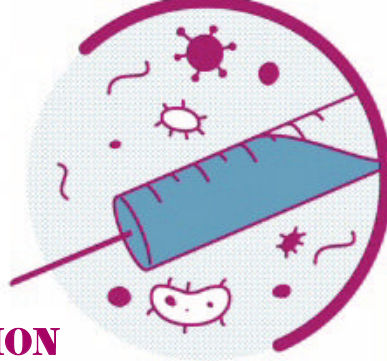
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VACCINES:

A SHOT IN THE ARM FOR PREVENTION



“When we first started working in global health, we were shocked to learn how many children in low-income countries were still dying from diseases that could have been prevented with vaccines,” says Melinda Gates, co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Africa accounts for more than half of all deaths due to Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD), and with over half a million African children under 5 dying from VPDs every year, the continent has been a central vaccine focus for international organizations like UNICEF and the WHO.

But more is needed than merely international aid. “African countries are donor-dependent to the likes of UNICEF and GAVI. By virtue of the procurement being done through UNICEF (and not by the governments themselves), companies like **Biovac** do not have direct access to the countries,” says **Dr. Morena Makhoana**, the company’s CEO. Makhoana heads the only domestic vaccine manufacturer in southern Africa, which started in 2003 from a public partnership when the South African government realized the need for a local vaccine-manufacturing presence. Biovac currently supplies South Africa’s own vaccination program, EPI, while partnering with other private players. “For public-private partnerships to work, 25 to 30 years are needed in order to build the capability that the government on their own would not be able to build,” Dr. Makhoana stresses. “It must be a long-term commitment.”

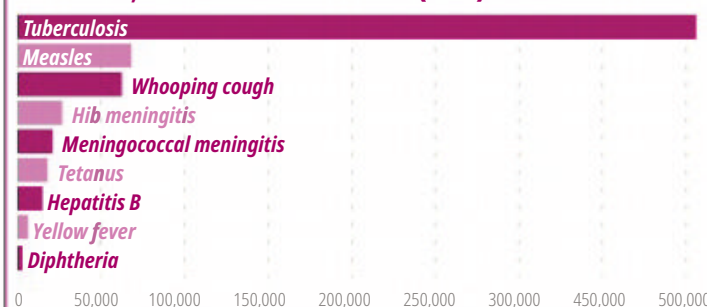
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Pfizer is one such partner who, alongside Biovac, is building up local manufacturing capacity for a pneumococcal vaccine—which could be responsible for eliminating up to 400,000 preventable deaths worldwide each year, with 275,000 in Africa alone. “We will contribute to continued security of supply of the pneumococcal vaccine, thereby continuing to make a significant impact in the reduction of childhood pneumonia in South Africa,” says **Rhulani Nhlaniki**, the company’s **South Africa Country Manager**.



Another such partner, **Merilynn Steenkamp**, GM of **Sanofi Pasteur SA**, elaborates, “Our long-term partnership with Biovac is essential to continue to build on our expertise and capability within South Africa.” As the market leader in Africa, **Sanofi Pasteur** currently supplies a range of vaccines that cover 17 different communicable diseases while also being the first in Africa to launch acellular pertussis combinations and conjugate meningitis vaccines. “The technology transfer to Biovac is for the most innovative vaccine globally, as it covers six diseases in one vaccine,” Steenkamp says. Regarding the market share of vaccines, **Dr. Makhoana** highlights that vaccines used to represent 2% of global pharma sales and have now risen to over 5%. “It still continues to be very small,” he says. “However, it will continue growing over time as we shift to a preventative approach to healthcare.”

DEATHS CAUSED BY VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (2017)



Source: <https://ourworldindata.org>

There is additional economic spillover linked to vaccines’ preventative potential. In Africa alone, VPDs result in an estimated \$13 billion annual burden on the already stressed healthcare system. Additionally, Pfizer’s Nhlaniki emphasizes, “The technology transfer process has enabled significant knowledge transfer, job creation, and direct investment, strengthening South Africa’s standing as a research and development hub in Africa.”

There have been considerable investments in other areas of Africa. In regards to the global polio initiative, Steenkamp details Sanofi Pasteur’s efforts: “We are the number one partner to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, and in the past 10 years, we have delivered 1 billion doses of polio vaccines globally, including Africa. Sanofi Pasteur is in partnership with various stakeholders on the continent. One of our strongest partnerships is with the WHO where we are stockpiling to help with outbreak control.” However, manufacturing vaccines is still a tricky business. “Production and supply of vaccines can still be quite complex,” Steenkamp cautions. “A single product can take up to 36 months to manufacture and supply and distribution can be a challenge. Long term commitments with governments and partners are imperative to ensure sustainability of vaccines.”

Sandra Lambert, current **Managing Director of Baxter South Africa**, and former **Chief Commercial Officer for Biovac**, notes that “with local manufacturing, the only way to reduce your costs is to increase volumes—basic economies of scale. In order for Biovac to be competitive 5-10 years from now, they need to supply vaccines to expand their reach in Africa. Local manufacturing of medicines is incredibly important for Africa”.




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SANOFI PASTEUR 

Reference 1. World Health Organization. Immunization Coverage. Available at: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs378/en/>. Last accessed October 2019

SAZA.HECE.19.12.0478

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THE ONGOING HISTORY OF BLACK HEALTHCARE



The Clinix Health Group is the latest link in a proud chain of tradition, when activists like **G.M. Pitje** and **Dr N. Motlana** strove to provide accessible healthcare to disenfranchised communities. "I came later and am now part of the journey they began when I was given the opportunity to invest with them back in 1992," says Clinix's founder, Dr. Khamane Matseke.

Now operating several hospitals in historically underserved communities, Clinix provides affordable, high-quality, primary to tertiary care. To expand access, they have heavily integrated technology; from remote health-status monitoring to minimally invasive surgeries, technology is transforming the cost and quality of healthcare Clinix provides.

"Because of gadgets such as cell phones and watches, patients are able to monitor health status remotely," says Dr. Matseke, adding that doctors are also able to access such information remotely. "This sees us moving into a future where a large percentage of our medical needs can be catered for without even having to physically see a medical practitioner." The biggest challenge, Dr. Matseke notes, is people. "The younger generations adapt quickly, however for older people, technology is more difficult to trust. Going into the future, healthcare providers also have change the way we are doing things."

In addressing the importance of government collaboration, Dr. Matseke says, "In Limpopo, we had a partnership with the Department of Health where a Dialysis Centre of Excellence was established. It is our belief that the future of healthcare lies in cooperation between the Public and Private sector." He believes that the government still needs to continue in its vital role to train medical personnel and specialists, but that there are also opportunities for the private sector to assist in teaching and training, and that the presence of Clinix hospitals in lower-income areas produces further downstream effects. Citing the economic spillover of Clinix, Dr. Matseke states, "We not only employ local people; we also expose communities to a very varied skills development opportunities. When providing for a healthy community, there are returns which are guaranteed on many levels, for a very long time to come."

RIGHT MEDICINE, TO THE RIGHT PATIENT, AT THE RIGHT TIME



"With the whole supply chain, there are often unforeseeable consequences," says **Carel Bouwer, the General Manager of Clinigen South Africa**, a group that brings together five synergistic businesses focused in three areas of global medicine supply—clinical trials, unlicensed medicines, and licensed medicines. "You might have a factory burn down or have difficulties with the regulation. Anything can happen." However, it is under uncertain circumstances where Clinigen is specially qualified to help. "If a product is discontinued, we would like to provide a solution or to take it over even if it's for a smaller market. If a supplier is out of stock, we would partner and provide access to that medicine for the period that they're out of stock," Bouwer explains. Clinigen also specializes in medicines that are currently not licensed but are often safely prescribed for rare or pediatric conditions and that often requires collaboration with the government. Bouwer elaborates, "When there's a local supply that's out of stock, we work with the government to provide access for those lines for that short period of time." He adds that Clinigen has grand plans for overcoming South Africa's supply problems: "The aim going forward is to be able to press a button and source that medication globally."

CLINIGEN

SANOFI'S FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

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THIBAUT CROSNIER LECONTE,
GM OF SANOFI SOUTH AFRICA

“There are the 3 pillars of access:
equity, efficiency, and education.”

EF: YOU HAVE SEEN HEALTHCARE CHANGE SUBSTANTIALLY IN THE THREE YEARS YOU HAVE BEEN GM FOR SANOFI IN RSA. HOW HAS YOUR MISSION EVOLVED?

TCL: One of South Africa’s main challenges is the way the healthcare system is structured. The private sector caters for 8 to 9 million people while the public sector provides for the rest of the 47 million people. The private system is similar to the US system. The more one pays, the more one can access innovation and technology.

EF: HOW DOES SANOFI’S PORTFOLIO CATER TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN DISEASE MAP?

TCL: We have a diverse product portfolio which seeks to address South Africa’s healthcare needs in key therapeutic areas particularly Diabetes, Mental Health, Tuberculosis, Rare Diseases, and Vaccines. There has also been an explosion of non-communicable diseases like diabetes, and Sanofi is well positioned to play a meaningful role in combating these emerging diseases.

EF: HOW DOES SANOFI ENSURE SECURITY OF SUPPLY IN SOUTH AFRICA?

TCL: For years we’ve focused on affordability. However, for the new innovative therapies, affordability becomes a challenge. This will be a key consideration during the NHI transition. We have a local manufacturing facility which addresses a major public health need, i.e. TB. *With our local plant, we can respond quickly to the demands of the country.*

EF: HOW CAN TECHNOLOGY ENABLE EFFICIENCIES IN THE SYSTEM?

TCL: In 2018, Sanofi introduced Vula Mobile to the National Department of Health (NDOH) and was easily accepted and put to use in all provinces. Vula Mobile is a medical referral app that makes it easy for GPs & primary healthcare workers to get advice from specialists and refer patients to them. The aim of the app is to give health workers – particularly those in remote rural areas – a tool that helps to get patients quick and efficient specialist care. Consequently, the demand for specialist services is reduced because HCP’s at lower levels can manage patients without the need for upward referrals.

EF: WHAT SORT OF IMPACT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR SOUTH AFRICAN TENURE?

TCL: Whatever I do must have an impact on healthcare and on patients, not only through the supply of medicines, but through supporting the healthcare system. I’m striving to have an impact through empowering medical officers with education and helping the government improve efficiencies for the benefit of the patient through investing in innovative ways to reach and service the patient irrespective of their geographies. *Sanofi has a legacy of forming partnerships. My ambition is to strengthen this partnership paradigm to have an even bigger impact on patients and their quality of life.* The launch of a new treatment option for latent TB is a prime example of such a partnership with the government and various other stakeholders. Patients will now have access to an innovative treatment solution that shortens a 12-month treatment to 3 months. This medicine will be a game changer for patients with latent TB as it is a simplified regimen which will make it easier for both HCPs and patients in managing their treatment.

5 FACTS ON WALTLOO PLANT

1 Waltloo produces the full range of tuberculosis treatment medicines combining up to 4 different drugs in one tablet.
70% of the volume of TB

medicines is produced for the public sector
2 The site is recognized as a global center of excellence for the production of anti-tuberculosis medicine, which is exported to 13 countries including Europe, Australia, UK, Brazil.

3 In addition to the production of TB, the site also produces medicine for epileptic disease and medicines for central nervous system, with a dedicated complementary medicines facility for the production

of consumer health product range.
4 In the last 5 years, Sanofi has invested approximately R27 million in expanding and upgrading infrastructure to increase manufacturing capacity for TB medicines.

5 The expansions at the factory has resulted in Sanofi being able to retain and create new employment opportunities, for 300 employees.



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Chief Technology Health Officers

South Africa's innovation profile is supported by global indicators such as the Good Country Index, where it ranks 18th out of 163 countries for Science & Technology—but in the area of medical technologies, South Africa has traditionally been a distributor market.

"The main product areas in terms of value is general consumables, diagnostic imaging, and then orthopedics and prosthetics," says **Tanya Vogt, Executive Officer** of SAMED, which represents over 160 medical device companies that serve a market expected to grow from U\$72 million in 2018 to U\$99 million by 2022. "Our market ties in quite nicely with our disease burden," she adds, "because diagnostics is needed for TB and HIV, more so now that in non-communicable diseases, we are seeing a huge increase in diabetes, obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular."

Yet, at its foundation remains the need to not lose sight of the most fundamental aspects of health.

"From an African perspective, it is about basic healthcare needs at a primary care setting that will impact patients' lives in the long term," says **Ian Wakefield, Africa General Manager** at BD. "Many Africans don't have access to that right now. If we could provide access to as many patients as possible, we will change the lives of Africans, thereby impacting productivity and quality of life. It's great to have innovative technology to provide a solution for a sophisticated disease area, but Africa's needs are much more basic. For example, there is need for preventative interventions such as cervical cancer screening and for the delivery of basic healthcare services such as providing education and treatment to diabetic patients. If that level of care is provided, we could truly elevate the lives of Africans."

Mark Flint, CEO of Siemens Healthineers South Africa, speaks to the importance of technology as process, not just product. "When a person goes to a public hospital they are registered, tests are done, and prescriptions are given," he says. But, if a month later there is follow up at another hospital, "the patient has to be registered again, get another CT scan, another prescription for drugs, etc. We need to have a system where the patient data can be viewed at all the state hospitals through South Africa. The medical history of a patient that lives in Cape Town should be instantly accessible in hospitals in Pretoria or Johannesburg if the patient happens to have an accident there." Flint suggests that NHI has the potential to dovetail with his sensible vision of the future. "It's going to happen because today there are 40 million people without access to care, and this is a huge challenge. In Limpopo, there is no mammography machine in the whole state and the mortality rate for breast cancer is high. Innovative solutions can be found, such as mobile breast-screening clinics that transmit data by 4G or satellite, giving a pool of doctors access to data that can be sent anywhere. "The productivity that comes out of this is enormous, saving people's time and resources."



"We did it in the past," says Sandra Lambert, MD Baxter South Africa & SADC Region. "We eradicated smallpox. How did we do that? Many years ago, with none of the technology that we have today. Every person got vaccinated. I do believe it's just a matter of commitment." Lambert has seen it first hand: in a remote village in the middle of Uganda, all the villagers have a mobile phone. "How is it possible that we've made smartphones reach everyone's hand, but we haven't been able to make healthcare reach everyone?" she asks. "Surely the infrastructure for mobile technology had to be created? I think that this is because the focus has to been 100% dedicated to healthcare."

Lambert has given a lot of thought to the right PPP (private-public partnership)

models that might inspire such effective interventions. “When you know what the need is, then you know how to build a public-private partnership that will work,” Lambert says. “People don’t often take the time to understand the country, the issues. Sometimes it’s so simple but it can make a huge difference. Sometimes the PPP offer is so complicated that it will never be able to be implemented. I like to build PPPs that actually add value.

“What I would like to see is PPPPs: private-private-public partnerships. I wish there were companies that would sit down together and contribute complementary products/services. If we collaborate with other companies and go to the government together, we can make such a difference.”

Baxter



BUSINESS MODELS, REMODELED

“We need business models that will help foster a deeper sense of human satisfaction and purpose at work,” says **Amanda Wilde of Umsinsi Health Care**, the first South African company to adopt the UK John Lewis Partnership Business Model, a co-ownership structure where employees democratically help determine several key aspects of the business. Wilde explains that the model was originally set up to achieve social-class reconciliation, and Umsinsi—a licensed Medical Device Company and Social Enterprise dedicated to providing innovative, cost-effective products and services, while achieving fairness and reconciliation in the healthcare industry—has successfully applied it to the persistent challenges of social class, race, and gender in South Africa. This socially-driven business model has resulted in initiatives like the Love Skin Campaign, an initiative focused on the varying responses of different skin types in wound healing and wound care. Wilde notes, “We would appreciate investment, support, and people behind us, who understand that placing social objectives first will help achieve improved business outcomes. Because they are intrinsically tied together.”



A LOCAL STAR

Joseph Phetla is Founder and Director of Langamedics, a medical device company specializing in orthopedics, just one shining example in the constellation of local stars in the homegrown industry. “We have brought a Black-owned company to fruition in South Africa, leading the way for other companies and for the development of the country,” says Phetla, noting that there’s plenty of room for growth, since **86% of South Africa’s medical devices are currently imported**. Langamedics aims to reduce this imbalance with an increase in domestic manufacturing. Phetla concludes, “Being local players, we understand how to meet the needs of South Africans at the grassroots level while providing world-class quality of product and service.”



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‘Liberate The Energies Of Our Communities’

Reputed Rwandan economist and chair of pan-African financial advisory and investment firm SouthBridge, Dr Donald Kaberuka, on the great lockdown recession and what Africa can do.

AS THE SEVENTH PRESIDENT OF THE African Development Bank (AfDB) serving two terms until 2015, Dr Donald Kaberuka led the development and economic integration of the continent. As the African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund, and on the board of the Center for Global Development, amongst other illustrious roles, Kaberuka has had a long career in international trade and finance. He speaks to FORBES AFRICA from Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, about the way forward in the current global economic crisis:

You have had a distinguished career bringing about major development and economic reforms, and even Rwanda’s economic recovery after the genocide. What are the lessons you can offer in overcoming our current challenges?

The first thing we teach young students of economics is that economics is about scarcity and it means trade-offs, or what we call optimization. And so, in terms of economic policies, you are always in that space of ‘resources are scarce, how do you optimize’. In the Covid-19 response, our countries [are at this point]: ‘do you put the people at risk or do you confine them to save their lives, and at the same time, their livelihoods are [at risk]’... Our approach should be that we save people’s lives and we do our best to save livelihoods. This is the response at the moment... The lessons I have learned in my career is about trade-offs in addressing problems.

You may criticize governments in cutting down confinements or making them longer, it’s in that space of ‘how do we optimize the solution’.

There’s no real magic formula at this point for saving lives and livelihoods. What about robust multi-stakeholder collaborations and unlikely partnerships that can help?

Within our countries, we have to look at community solutions, bring in the private sector, bring in faith groups and see how together we build resilience. The governments have done their best but we now need to liberate the energies of our communities. In one country, for example, instead of confinements at home, they have allowed churches, mosques and schools to be the areas of confinement for testing and communities have come forward to give people supplies, water and food etc. Those who are in retirement are coming forward to provide support too. So I think liberating the energies of the communities is extremely important.

What about the banks and financial institutions that are sitting on cash, can they not unlock it for SMEs for example?

Let me cut this down into two. Look at how the rich countries are doing it; they are throwing out the rule books. They have



Dr Donald Kaberuka

Photo supplied

a lot of resources... To try and safeguard the financial system or businesses, now, in Africa, we don't have those kinds of resources. In addition, in our countries, 80% of employment is generated by the informal sector and small businesses, and 50% of GDP comes from there. Therefore, the recovery mode in Africa can only be around small businesses and the informal sector. We have to figure out a way in which we can build resilience in that part of the economy; one way is new forms of financing for them, and guarantee instruments that ensure governments pay small business where they have not paid them, as often, that is the problem. There are countries where small business margins are so small, so if they provide goods and services to municipalities, and they have not paid, then that means they are going out of business. We will have to [act] our response around small business and the informal sector.

What are your learnings from the 2008 global financial crisis that we could use now?

One is leadership. During the global financial crisis, the leader of the G20 was UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The G20 put out a powerful response and it worked. The damage was brutal but brief. We are looking for the same level of leadership in the G20 at this time. The chair, which is Saudi Arabia, will need to figure out how. But this is not a crisis any one country can pull off on its own.

Secondly, I listened to the UK's Chancellor of the Exchequer [Rishi Sunak] presenting the stimulus package to Parliament, and he said 'this is no time for ideology and orthodoxy, this is the time to put the fires out; we shall keep the receipts and the time will come to add up the bills, but for now, focus on putting out the fire'. So for me, that is what it is; use whatever it takes to deal with the crisis.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) calls it the great lockdown recession. What are your views on prolonged or shorter shutdowns?

The exit strategy will be country to country and respond to the epidemiology of the virus. A number of African countries are beginning to allow people to wear masks and keep social distance. But there are places where the level of fatalities is still high. What this means is the great lockdown will probably lead to the first major recession in Africa in the last 35 years. Africa went through pain in the 1980s, went through economic reforms in the 1990s and turned the corner in 2000. The risk is that all that is now lost. For us, it is not even about a recession as such. It is about can we safeguard the achievements of the last 35 years? In a young continent, with a population increase of 2.6% a year, and negative growth over several years, [it] will set us back for a long time.

Will this not also push back the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)?

Look at it this way. Already, we are all struggling. We don't have the

financing to fund the SDGs; that was already a challenge. Covid-19 has added another gap, and now we have a double gap. So how do we fund SDGs, plus the impact of Covid-19? And this will require the kind of global efforts we have not seen since 1945. In the destruction caused by World War II, the world came together, created the United Nations, World Bank, IMF and WTO; put together an architecture and system to rebuild the world. We will probably need something similar at this time.

In its April *World Economic Outlook*, the IMF projects global growth in 2020 to fall to -3%. What is the worst that can come out of all of this?

The best thing to do now is build scenarios, based on whether the Covid-19 impact is brief or sustained. As we don't know the behavior of the virus and how long it will be around, it's better we build best-case and worse-case scenarios. But we don't know. Never in my whole life would I have thought that the G8 countries and the European countries with so many resources, would be overwhelmed the way they are...

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement was supposed to come into force on July 1. Business is pushing for it, what do you advise?

I think we should keep this on target. AfCFTA is not just about the movement of physical goods; it's about payment systems and digital trading platforms, and so things in that space; the policy areas, that will continue. At some point, physical trade will resume and in fact, even now, regional traffic is continuing, with cautions being taken. I think we should go ahead. When most think of the AfCFTA, they think of traditional barriers to trade like tariffs and non-tariff restrictions, but the new ones are payment systems, online trading platforms and harmonizing investment regulations. I think probably there are opportunities here to think of how the AfCFTA can be accelerated.

In your role as chair of SouthBridge, how challenging has it been at this time? What is the investment landscape of the future in Africa?

As chairman of SouthBridge, I have been amazed at the potential of the continent... The world is awash with capital... African countries require capital, yet our countries are paying high premium, risk is exaggerated, and at SouthBridge, we are trying to bring capital into these countries. We are working in the policy space to make sure it happens, that we structure deals and raise funds. We are going to deepen our activities in fund-raising, and in advising international companies to come to Africa etc... We will have to reengineer and reimagine the private equity model. The way it has worked traditionally in rich countries has come to a point where it will need to evolve, where we are not just acquiring assets and growing them, that we are looking at patient capital and assisting companies to grow, and identifying opportunities for the future. 

– Interviewed by Renuka Methil

The Turn of Events

With the grounding of the global aviation industry, the money-spinning meetings and events sector is also on a downward spiral. Will local tourism lead its recovery?

BY MASHOKANE MAHLO-RAMUSETHELI

MAURITIAN BRIDE-TO-BE, OLIVIA MAUREL, was all set for the wedding of her dreams at the end of April. But with Covid-19 playing party pooper, she had to make the heart-rending decision of postponing her nuptials. With three-quarters of her guest-list expected to fly into the sunny island of Mauritius, from every corner of the globe, she had no other option.

“The risks of countries closing borders and key people, such as my fiancé’s grandmother, being unable to come from England, was a huge motivator for us to [postpone],” says Maurel.

The billion-dollar global wedding industry will probably not see any big bridal gatherings for months to come. The cognac and crystal will have to wait so long as Covid-19 is the only attendee that has RSVP-ed.

With the coronavirus cancelling significant conferences and business gatherings worldwide such as the Adobe Summit and the Game Developers Conference; as also mega sports, social and entertainment events such as Coachella, the Cannes Film Festival and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) industry is facing the annihilating prospect of empty venues and nil revenue. Closer home, in Africa, events such as IAB Bookmarks Awards and Summit; and lifestyle and entertainment events such as AfrikaBurn, the Cape Town International Jazz Festival and the Bushfire Festival hosted in Swaziland every year, have all been casualties. And alongside that reality, life-changing events such as graduations, anniversaries and funerals are now being conducted on laptop screens.

The meetings and events industry has been impacted disproportionately by the virus. Unlike many other economic activities, the events industry is based on physical interaction between people. It’s

a type of tourism in which conventions of large groups, usually planned well in advance, are organized at a physical destination.

Securing major conference events can benefit the local economy of the host city or country – particularly attracting business travelers. Research shows that business travelers are the golden goose in the travel industry. Unlike leisure travelers, they, or their sponsors, often spend more money.

According to the South African Tourism (SAT) board, the events industry, directly and indirectly, sustains more than 250,000 jobs and contributes an estimated R115 billion (\$6.2 billion) to the country’s economy.

“Every year, South Africa hosts 211,000 regional, national and international meetings, conferences and exhibitions,” says the CEO of SAT, Sisa Ntshona. “The industry has undoubtedly been heavily hit by this pandemic, which also has negative bearings on employment and the continuity of businesses in the tourism sector.” Annually, the country attracts a million international delegates for business.

As the virus continues to sweep the continent, abandoned halls and venues are being transformed into field hospitals to be used as treatment centers for patients. South Africa’s minister of health Zweli Mkhize announced in May plans to convert the Cape Town International Convention Centre to become a temporary hospital with 857 beds for patients unable to effectively self-isolate until they are no longer infectious. This comes after the FNB Stadium in Johannesburg was earmarked for the same.

A report issued at the end of March by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates international tourist arrivals could decline by 20% to 30% in 2020 based on the latest measures taken by governments, businesses as well as the patterns observed from previous

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global crises. The impact thereof translates to a loss of \$300 billion to \$450 billion in international tourism receipts (exports). Ntshona cautions to interpret data prudently given the magnitude, volatility and unprecedented nature of the crisis. “The true effect may only be accurately calculated and reflected much later,” he says.

It’s crucial to understand how Africa was positioned pre-pandemic. Henk Graaff, who runs SW Africa, a boutique destination management company in Johannesburg specializing in inbound tourism in the MICE, luxury, golf and leisure travel segments in Africa, affirms the continent has been an attractive destination for tourists, corporates, event planners, weddings and honeymoons. Countries such as South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Victoria Falls (Zimbabwe and Zambia), Zanzibar (Tanzania), Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda were seeing increased interest and growing in popularity as events destinations.

It’s unsurprising as Africa offers a vast array of exceptional, customized and personalized locations that exceed expectations. This is strengthened by improved infrastructure, accessibility, expansion of flights and connectivity services within the region from major source markets such as Europe, Asia and America. Attractions such as the wilderness, the Masai Mara and the mountain gorillas of East Africa are now easily accessible.

But at this time, businesses such as SW Africa are strained and seeking relief. “We received both cancellations and postponements, some of which led to demands for refunds from us and in turn from our suppliers, some of whom have been more flexible than others, leading to tension in supply chain relations,” says Graaff.

He is pleading with suppliers to become ultra-flexible post the lockdown with regards to price, pre-payment and cancellation terms. He believes this will minimize or eliminate the perceived risk in the eyes of potential clients, who will be both relatively budget-conscious and risk-averse.

Maurel was luckier as her suppliers were more accommodating. “Thankfully, everyone has been super-understanding, and we’re all working together to find something that works for everyone’s schedules,” she says. “Luckily, my wedding dress wasn’t finished when lockdown started, so it’s still at Robyn Robert’s studio – if it hadn’t been, I would’ve been so tempted to run around in it and have a *Friends* moment!”

However, some suppliers in the value chain are grappling with an even tougher predicament. According to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), no airline, regardless of how well-capitalized, would be able to absorb the impact of the Covid-19 groundings for a prolonged period. The government-imposed travel ban, social distancing and maximum limits to gatherings have caused a steep decline in passenger demand for air flights to which airlines have responded by reducing their scope of operations and costs. Many airlines have been forced to park their fleets, with most seeking financial support and debt relief measures amid the low, in some cases, non-existent demand.

All African countries will feel the impact relative to the scope

of their aviation industries, according to aviation specialist and analyst, Joachim Vermooten.

“The regulatory imposition of travel bans to and from specific states and later to airline operations have brought most scheduled commercial airline operations to a halt. Some one-way directional charter and cargo opportunities have arisen, but these are insufficient to maintain any scale of network operations,” says Vermooten. As a result, airlines are now focused on cash retention and several relief measures, including compulsory leave for staff and issuing travel vouchers and re-bookings, instead of ticket refunds to customers. The battle is uphill as several African carriers have remained financially distressed ahead of the pandemic. Air Namibia and South African Airways (SAA), for example, have been facing severe operating issues.

As global citizens navigate the new ways of engaging and working during the lockdown, technology has been both an aid and a threat to the tourism and MICE sector.

Organizations and individuals have embraced and leveraged technology to facilitate interactions. This includes the massive adoption of tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Skype. We are also seeing national tourism boards innovating through virtual reality to give travelers delightful “insperiences” from the comfort of their quarantined corners.

To avoid minimum job losses and devastating economic damage, South Africa’s department of tourism has made R200 million (\$10.8 million) available to assist small-medium enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism and hospitality sector who are under particular stress due to the lockdown restrictions.

In addition, SAT is in the process of developing an industry-wide recovery plan. “To ensure that this plan is robust, we are consulting the tourism sector from the large listed players to the SMEs to input into this plan. This plan will be a blueprint on how we move forward as an industry,” Ntshona says.

With the end of the pandemic indeterminable, it’s currently impossible to speculate what lies on the other side. Due to seasonality and strong preventative measures taken by most African governments, the entire continent has the least positive cases and deaths from Covid-19 than other sovereign states. This might be advantageous for marketing African destinations to be considered relatively safer during the recovery phase. “At the heart of our recovery, will be domestic travel,” says Ntshona.

Even so, domestic travelers may initially favor alternative modes of travel to air, such as motor vehicle travel, further adding strain to the aviation industry.

This is echoed by Graaff who believes domestic travel will lead the recovery, and then demand will expand to neighboring destinations and eventually further afield.

It may be a while before a new recovery path is defined, but for now, everything hangs in the air. 

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BY TSHILIDZI MARWALA

The writer is a professor and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg. He deputizes President Cyril Ramaphosa on the South African Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

How AI Is Helping Covid-19 Diagnostics And Detection

IN THE EARLY HOURS of New Year's Eve last year, BlueDot's artificial intelligence (AI) warning system, which sifts through 100,000 articles and online posts daily in 65 languages, flagged a news report about a few "unusual pneumonia" cases happening in the crowded metropolis of Wuhan in China.

The Toronto-based startup had spotted the coronavirus, or Covid-19, nine days before the World Health Organization (WHO) released a statement alerting people to the emergence of the virus. BlueDot, which is based on big data and machine learning, was created by healthcare professor Kamran Khan.

It sends out alerts of disease outbreaks that its AI has discovered, and the potential risks posed to healthcare, government, business, and public health clients.

Khan founded the startup following the Severe Acute

Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003, which affected 26 countries, resulted in more than 8,000 cases, killed 774 people and cost an estimated \$40 billion globally, in just six months. BlueDot signaled a warning that many at the time did not heed.

Since then, the coronavirus has been declared a pandemic by WHO and has had a devastating impact globally, with very few countries emerging unscathed. Large-scale quarantines, in some instances complete lockdowns, travel restrictions and social distancing have seen economies ravaged, unemployment rise, and there are now expectations of a recession far worse than the global financial crisis of 2008-09.

Yet, in this global health crisis, proponents of AI have been swift to act. The use of AI to combat the coronavirus has ranged from robotic cleaners spraying disinfectant at segregated wards to voice assistants calling people to advise on home-quarantine to AI-powered infrared sensors that detect body temperatures on the foreheads of moving passengers. The autonomous robots, for instance, have replaced human cleaners, which have reduced infection rates and can also work non-stop for more than three hours. This has been particularly effective in China and South Korea where there has been a marked slowdown in infection rates in recent weeks.

This is also mainly because detection has been made easier with AI. DAMO Academy, a research institute under Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba, has developed an AI device capable of detecting the coronavirus in just under 20 seconds with 96% accuracy. The AI was trained using 5,000 samples from confirmed cases and can now identify the virus from chest CT scans, differentiating between infected patients and general viral pneumonia cases. South Korea was swift to act following the outbreak in China, anticipating a spread into its borders. The government mobilized

the private sector to develop testing kits for the virus.

It is not just pockets of AI that have cropped up in these regions. The opportunity for AI to speed up the discovery of vaccines, drugs and diagnostics is gaining traction elsewhere. Projects such as the Covid-19 Open Research Dataset provide free access to the texts of almost 25,000 research papers while the Covid-net open access neural network is working on systems similar to those deployed by the DAMO Academy. Vir Biotechnology and Atomwise, startups in the United States, are using AI to identify a molecule that could serve as the basis of treatment.

Similarly, there has been a shift to find AI solutions on the continent with Africa's cases sitting at around 5,000 by the end of March. Data science competition platform Zindi, which is based in South Africa and Ghana, has launched a challenge sponsored by the Artificial Intelligence for Development-Africa Network (AI4D-Africa). This challenge asks data scientists to build an epidemiological model that predicts the spread of Covid-19 throughout the world over the next few months, which is critical for both policymakers and health workers to make informed decisions and take action.

In Kenya, startup Afya Rekod is deploying AI and Blockchain to establish a health data platform which allows users to store their health records, access health information and connect to health service providers.

While the disruptions caused by the coronavirus will undoubtedly be our 'new normal' for a while, we are far more technologically equipped than we were with the SARS outbreak of 2003, let alone the Spanish Flu outbreak which followed a similar trajectory a century ago. The end of the coronavirus may just lie in the same technology that anticipated it would be a pandemic. 

The Leading Voice In Telling The African Story

On June 1, *CNBC Africa* celebrates 13 years of relaying boundless stories of economic growth and prosperity on the African continent. It achieved its objective of changing the narrative and continues to do so with relentless reporting in the time of Covid-19.

BY RAKESH WAHI, FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER, FORBES AFRICA, AND CO-FOUNDER AND VICE CHAIRMAN, ABN GROUP



Board members as on June 1, 2019:
(Standing, from left): Sam Bhembe, Sid Wahi, Christo Fourie
Roberta Naicker, Rakesh Wahi, Zafar Siddiqi and Busi Mabuza

THERE ARE MIXED EMOTIONS AS WE CELEBRATE *CNBC Africa*'s 13th birthday this year. There is untold joy in the reality that we have accomplished so much in the last 13 years. On June 1, 2007, there was a flutter of activity at Sandown Mews in Sandton in Johannesburg, as hundreds of guests came to witness the launch of the first pan-African business news television station.

The channel was born of a dire need to provide the world boundless stories of economic growth and prosperity on the African continent. All that was being reported were stories of gloom, doom and despotic leadership; that were not representative of the paradigm shift of an Africa rising. *CNBC Africa*, under the ABN Group, achieved the objective of changing the narrative and is today a leading voice in telling the African story of economic prosperity; this is validated as we continue to receive glowing tributes from all captains of industry and policy-makers from across the continent.

This glory has not come without its challenges. The industry has evolved more rapidly and has been impacted by technology and changing consumption patterns of its customers more than most other businesses. It's indisputable that good and relevant content will always remain king but in order to remain ahead of the curve, the content also needs to be tailored increasingly to the customers' (viewers) needs on the one hand and the clients' (advertisers) needs on the other. While internet-delivered content will continue to grow, blended businesses like traditional TV provide an experience that will remain superior to digital-only businesses, as they have both features. The science of content creation and delivery will always be at the cutting-edge of our business.

The welcome change that we are going to witness is the alteration in the distribution models. Internet-based aggregators are likely to grow exponentially and will herald the decline of the monopolistic and highly inefficient subscription business currently prevalent.

With further tariff reductions and alliances with telcos, we will see more value provided to customers through competitive pricing models and an equitable distribution of income to content producers, many of who are impaired by the incongruity of the current subscription model.

The current pandemic (Covid-19) has had a devastating impact on the media industry as a whole but on niche broadcasters in particular. On the one hand, media provides an essential service to all citizens by keeping everyone updated, but revenue has all but dried up through this period, threatening the existence of a lot of businesses. We have made a humble appeal to all our advertisers and supporters to continue working with and supporting media companies through this crisis. We cannot succeed in our mission without the support of our viewers, advertisers and stakeholders to whom we remain eternally grateful for their backing over this long journey.

No tribute is complete without a thumping appreciation to our team that has worked endlessly to see this dream become a reality. In all parts of the continent, they have adapted to change, met challenges and continued to give their best under the leadership of Roberta Naicker, Sid Wahi, Chris Bishop, Jean Landsberg, Thameshan Sooriah, Fred VandeVyver and Denham Pons. I salute each one of them for their commitment and hard work.

The current crisis will see us coming out stronger, leaner and ready for the 'new normal' that awaits us. 



BY ELIZABETH ELANGO BINTLIFF

The writer is the CEO of Junior Achievement Africa, whose mission is bridging the gap between classroom education and the world of work for young Africans, reaching 250,000 students in 15 countries in Africa each year.

The Future Of The Global Workforce

Africans will make up the largest demographic in the global workforce, according to the United Nations.

How we equip them today for that future will largely influence business and the global economy. With the 21st century workplace requiring a rapid pace of skilling, upskilling and re-skilling, the preparedness of young people to lead in business and elsewhere is key to the dialogue about the future of work.

“We are struggling in Africa on so many levels in the education system,” says Amini Kajunju, Executive Director of the International University of Grand Bassam Foundation (IUGB) in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. “Let’s invest in a really good education. African universities are not prioritizing entrepreneurial education, not only as a course or set of courses, but as a mindset. That is a missed opportunity; if we continue to go down this path where we under-utilize how entrepreneurship could be a game-changer. We need to teach our 10-year-olds and 11-year-olds about entrepreneurship... Governments, the private sector and schools that promote entrepreneurship and people who can start businesses that can grow are economies that will be resilient to the challenges that can occur, be it a virus or anything else.”

But are African governments ready for this challenge?

“There is a huge disconnect between policy-makers and implementers,” says Daniel Dotse, CEO of Lead For Ghana, a leadership development organization nurturing a nationwide movement of leaders expanding educational opportunities to all children in Ghana. As an example, Dotse points to the Covid-19 social distance protocol that was put in place for high school students staying in school to prepare for national exams.

“Head teachers are doing what is best for them, but there is nothing guiding them on how to observe the protocol. It a clear example of the disconnect between what

is happening at policy level and what is happening on the ground.”

In addition, Dotse points to the gap in teacher training or school performance monitoring because administrators don’t have the means and resources to perform their supervisory roles.

“The way we recruit teachers is critical. The education world needs to go after the best and brightest graduates, just like in the medical field. At the moment, the prevailing practice is that people who graduate high school and are unable to go to university are the ones who go to teacher training institutes. Because of that, the foundations for children are very poor. Kids are coming into junior high

“

How can Africa’s schools be prepared for the ‘unknown’, it is safe to ask, if they are not even prepared for the ‘known’?

school unable to read a paragraph or spell their names.”

A number of institutions and organizations across Africa are emphasizing entrepreneurial thinking in their students. Lead For Africa, IUGB, Asheshi University, Junior Achievement Africa and African Leadership Academy, for example, place entrepreneurial mindsets at the core of their teaching. But these pale in comparison to the need.

But according to Dotse, these efforts will be reversed if policy-makers don’t create an environment for success.

“Leadership is everything. We need more entrepreneurs now more than ever. We need to allow these young people to fail. We need to do risk investment. But for all this to work, the education systems need to be strong.” 

AS THE WORLD reels from the devastating impact of the coronavirus on people, businesses, institutions and public services, governments across the world are forced to contend with the question of readiness, not just in public health but across all sectors. The pandemic is forcing us to ask the question ‘how well are we preparing for the future?’ and to begin exploring the answer to that question.

As the pandemic first ventured into Africa, many governments closed educational institutions pre-emptively, some announcing a shift to online and digital learning, even though in practice, schools were significantly under-resourced to make that shift.

How can Africa’s schools be prepared for the ‘unknown’, it is safe to ask, if they are not even prepared for the ‘known’?

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Under the guidance of His Excellency President Andry Rajoelina, the Initiative for the Emergence of Madagascar (IEM) is set to impact the investment landscape by focusing on 13 crucial pillars to revitalise the economy, such as education, employment, security, healthcare and others. Henri Rabarijohn, Governor of the Central Bank, says, "There is a vision and leadership right now. We want to effectively improve people's lives with new infrastructure, investment in education, health, housing. The Initiative is the translation of the commitment the President of Madagascar made during his campaign. It is a translation of his vision into some tangible projects and guides every person in priority sectors." The Initiative's specifics include specialised attention to the island's main industries, measures to facilitate foreign investment and job creation.

Madagascar's abundant natural resources make it a haven for the mining sector by offering investment opportunities through

the excavation of gemstones, industrial and decorative stones, oil and rare metals. Small-scale and artisanal mining alone generates 1.5 million full-time and seasonal jobs for locals, proving that local communities are one of the mining sector's greatest assets. The mining industry accounts for 30% of export earnings, 40% of FDI and 8% contribution to GDP. Christian Eddy Avellin, General Manager of SPAT says, "We have natural resources. We have plenty of coal to extract. We have gas reserves. Everything is here, but we haven't exploited anything yet. Today, Madagascar is a new country, a mining country, because we export nickel, cobalt and other resources." The mining industry takes great care to operate with the country's unique biodiversity as a top priority, working with local communities to define sustainable ways to make a living and harvest natural resources with conservation in mind.

The IEM is also aided by the energy sector. At the forefront of the administration are sustainable energy policies that focus on the immense potential of renewable energy resources through hydro, solar and wind power. Oil is also a huge prospect in Madagascar, especially with Tsimiroro field, one of the world's largest oil development projects, which boasts a potential of 100,000 barrels per day. The energy and oil sectors are actively involved in 11 of the 13 pillars of the president's Initiative, proving that these sectors are critical to Madagascar's prosperity. Russell J. Kelly, CEO of Madagascar Oil, says, "The future is looking very good. Energy is among the biggest drivers of economic development. We will soon be recognised as an oil-exporting country."

Madagascar is blessed with ample resources, strong sectors and a predominantly young workforce, where 70% of the population is under the age of 25. Under the leadership of H.E President Andry Rajoelina and the IEM, the country is creating an attractive business environment to enhance the economy. As a peaceful and stable country, Madagascar welcomes investors to contribute to its sustainable economic transformation. Richard Randriamandranto, Minister of Finance, says of Madagascar's potential: "If you wait, it will be too late. Madagascar has been enjoying a 5% growth rate for the last two years. This year we expect 5.5%. By 2023, we would see a 7% growth. We need to increase economic growth by investing in mining, agribusiness, infrastructure, electricity and energy. It has to be genuine, based on innovation, younger people's initiatives. Now is the time, not tomorrow."

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The BGFIBank Group is proud to have a presence in ten African countries. “We are almost 50 years old,” says Barnabé François, the Chief Executive Officer of BGFIBank Madagascar. “Our group began operations in Gabon and then broadened out into a number of African nations. Our activities in Madagascar started in 2010 and over the past ten years, our growth has been smooth. For the last two years, we have enjoyed an impressive performance on the red island.”

The president of BGFIBank, Henri-Claude Oyima, has a vision is to build an African bank for the world. “In relation to this pioneering objective we want to promote Malagasy’s entrepreneurship to the World. To do that, we relied on our years of experience as well as our strengths in adaptability and foresight in the market, especially in the context of the COVID-19 health crisis. Our bank has indeed made every effort to provide the best support to our customers during this delicate period,” Barnabé states. “Madagascar is not the same all over, so we decided to have a new plan for the country. We needed to open branches where the businesses are, which are mainly in the north and the east of the country, in order to reach more customers.” In terms of financial inclusion, BGFI has a plan to connect the people of Madagascar with banking services that serve their individual needs through different distribution channels including their new mobile banking platform and Smart ATM. For Barnabé, a client-centred approach is crucial. “If you do not create client-centric products, you will not reach the type of customers that you want. The future of a bank is the one that can respond to the daily needs of customer.” In Madagascar, the low bank account penetration rate, which is currently at 10%, is signalling a huge potential for innovation and digitalisation in the banking sector.

The pathway to this potential has been set in Madagascar’s Emergence 2030 Plan, which is set to improve the business environment of

the entire country. Madagascar has realised, as have many countries all over the world, that Africa is, in many ways, an undiscovered treasure and that now is the right moment to invest in the future of the continent. Barnabé says that through this ambitious project the country will witness new opportunities in many sectors. “The President of the Republic of Madagascar understands that he has a role to play. He has a huge opportunity. In twenty years, he could be remembered as the one who saved Madagascar and put it on the path of development. The people of Madagascar want to do business, to feel proud of their country. New investors will see the opportunity and open their enterprises in Madagascar due to the fact that Madagascar has a strategic position, tremendous natural resources and a young population. If the infrastructure is there, it’s much easier for investors to come.”

The Emergence Plan also ensures that the President of the Republic of Madagascar will have the support of the international community, signalling further growth for the country. “This will open a lot of doors, for us as a bank.” Public investment is important to the state spending for the year 2020. It is intended specifically for the creation and modernisation of infrastructure (energy, communication, roads, etc). This should revitalise the Malagasy economy and increase activities and related jobs. Also, financial inclusion will be accelerated: remote areas will be able to access financing or savings solutions either through NICTs or by increasing service points, thus creating an entire ecosystem generating jobs and income. “Let’s imagine that Madagascar could create 250,000 formal jobs per year compared to the 45,589 in 2018,” elaborates Barnabé. “This would give a tremendous positive boost to the economy and for us as a bank. In a nutshell, at BGFIBank we want our customers to be number one in their respective fields.”

OUR SUBSIDIARIES

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Niriko Rosalien Tsirenge

General Manager Of Société De Manutention Des Marchandises Conventionnelles (SMMC)

Delivering The Goods

Committed to innovation, economic growth and development, SMMC is keen to breathe new life into Toamasina port, working around the clock to meet their client's needs while establishing the port as the hub of the Indian Ocean.

As SPAT's (Société du Port à gestion Autonome de Toamasina) main concessionaire, SMMC, under the helm of Niriko Rosalien Tsirenge since August 2018, is committed to providing quality import and export goods handling services at the Port of Toamasina according to market demand. Penresa speaks to General Manager Niriko Rosalien Tsirenge.

Can you tell us a little about SMMC's history and activities?

SMMC was created in 2007 and then following the port reform, split the port in two departments: one which deals with the containers and the other with conventional goods. Essentially, every good we are importing which is not containerised is our responsibility (vehicles, cement, wheat, bitumen, rice, etc). As for exporting, we deal with chrome, lychee, as well as other items and goods as requests arise. We currently have 510 permanent employees and 520 daily workers, as well as machinery and tools adapted to the handling trades.

What is your vision for the company?

My vision is to normalise the company because adherence to standards will allow us to increase our overall performance. The advantages that standardisation provide include strategic assets and allows us to deal with our customers at outstanding levels while following the market's evolution. We have begun digitalisation through instalment management of software, stock software and we will install barcodes to better trace and track the goods of our human and material resources.

How will this add to the advantages of international players coming into the country?

Firstly, the port expansion has brought about a lot of new traffic. There is a lot of cement being imported and engines coming in from Japan. This is good for the country because this is going to be one of the biggest ports in the Indian Ocean, especially at a regional level in Austral Africa. The objective of this project is to make the Toamasina port the hub of the Indian Ocean. Right now, importation is the main business, and everything passes through here. We are the pivot of activity in the Toamasina port.



"The objective of this project is to make the Toamasina port the hub of the Indian Ocean. We are the pivot of activity in the Toamasina port."

What are you doing to improve the ease of doing business in Madagascar?

This is not a project, it is a general direction and a general directive. SMMC is already prepared, we have developed strategies and standard operating procedures for the whole company. We have already started to invest in materials capable of carrying out our operations and we will be adding more soon; the same with IT tools and management software. We are also looking into capacity building for our employees through the implementation of a training plan and an approach of continuous progress linked to new learning processes, knowledge and the development of new processes and standards.

What are some of your current projects?

In the short term, we plan to increase our storage capacity and thus develop new high-performance services for our customers. Studies are currently being finalised.

How is your company benefitting from the port expansion?

The expansion is going to be ready for 2025. We have a project to build out of the port, a sort of terminal other than Toamasina and we plan to do the same thing in the South. Traffic has increased and this new space in the port will bring us an advantage due to current lack of space. This, in turn, will attract investors and port stakeholders. We are also focusing on geostrategic location with structuring infrastructures to ensure the development of Madagascar over the long term.

What, do you believe, makes your organisation so unique?

We have the means but we also have the experience and this is what differentiates us from the others. SMMC seeks to innovate and diversify, we are a company that is moving and which still has far to go.

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TOAMASINA.

An expanding port at the centre of the world

With its 5,000 kilometres of coastline, Madagascar offers an abundant opportunity to the world. Located in the Indian Ocean, only 400 km away from African East coast, the island country has founded its notoriety on inland diversity, maritime wealth, and last but not least, its geostrategic position. Thanks to those assets, its main port, Toamasina, is acting as an economic springboard connecting all the continents of the globe.

Toamasina Port condenses three quarters of Madagascar maritime exchanges, and is currently undergoing an amazing revamping. By carrying out the greatest port development project in the Indian Ocean, Toamasina Port Authority, i.e. "Société du Port à gestion Autonome de Toamasina" (S.P.A.T), is showing its commitment to a fast growing maritime sector, as well as an inland economic development connectivity.

By 2025, Toamasina Port will meet the needs of the African continent as a maritime hub on the 'New Silk Road,' which will link the continents via the Indian Ocean maritime highway. This vision will lead Africa towards its bright future and, thanks to its amazing diversity, will propel sustainable development.

Madagascar is going from being considered a nation
at the end of world to becoming the centre of the world!

www.port-toamasina.com



MICTSL

Bringing Toamasina Port To New Heights

Expanding The Gateway Into Africa

MICTSL is pursuing its vision to expand the Toamasina port to international markets, which will open the windows of opportunity for Madagascar.

The government of Madagascar made a prescient decision in 2004, with the World Bank Group as advisor, to launch an international tender for a 20-year public-private partnership (PPP) contract for an expert port operator to manage and modernise Toamasina's container terminal and ensure the port could handle the country's future trade volumes.

ICTSI, the Philippine-based port operator with its extensive global experience, came out on top in the tender process and was awarded the contract in 2005. Through its local subsidiary company Madagascar International Container Terminal Services Ltd (MICTSL), it has been an integral part of Madagascar's economy ever since.

Michael Ratrimo, Director for Development, who has been with MICTSL from its outset, elaborates: "At the time, ICTSI was already one of the world's leading port operators and could, at very short notice, bring its expertise, know-how and financial capacity to Madagascar to upgrade Toamasina's container terminal to best industry standards. So, when MICTSL took over the management of the terminal in October 2005, we immediately started a broad investment and development programme to upgrade the port infrastructure, buy new operating equipment, implement modern IT systems and recruit and train Malagasy employees in modern port operations."

MICTSL connects Madagascar with the global markets that never sleep. Shipping lines expect to have their vessels' cargo loaded and unloaded quickly, anytime of the day and year. So MICTSL is open for business 24/7 and is always striving to perform to its own, and its customers, high standards. This can only be achieved in close cooperation with key stakeholders. In particular, the container terminal is close partner with the port authority, Société du Port à gestion Autonome de Toamasina (SPAT).

Handling over 90% of the country's container traffic, the Port of Toamasina is of key importance to the Malagasy economy. An efficient port contributes to the reduction in transport costs and increasing efficiency of the supply chain. To achieve the maximum benefits, MICTSL and SPAT also work with the wider logistics community: shipping lines, importers, exporters, trucking companies, clearing agents and administration. Ratrimo clarifies: "It is also worth mentioning the successful move from full manual process to paperless transactions. Together with the implementation of its Terminal Operating System, MICTSL redesigned the working process in close cooperation with customs authorities; EDI file exchanges have been preferred over hardcopy files hand to hand transmission and the whole port community is now connected to a single electronic platform."



Guido Heremans,
General Manager
of MICTSL



Michael Ratrimo,
Director for Development
of MICTSL

The modernisation achieved by this public-private partnership has played a vital role to Madagascar's continuing integration into the world economy and emergence as a major exporter of key agricultural goods. The volume of containers handled through the port has tripled since the beginning of the concession and, furthermore, the container terminal has emerged as a major fiscal asset for the government, with both import duties and corporate tax contributing very significantly to government revenues.

The Port of Toamasina's operational efficiency (the speed at which containers are moved between the ship and the port) is ranked in the Top 5 for all of Sub-Saharan Africa. MICTSL attributes this to a combination of the application of modern equipment and operating processes and highly talented Malagasy managers and equipment operators. But MICTSL is not satisfied yet and looks forward to continuing its public-private partnership with the government of Madagascar to develop the Port of Toamasina into becoming a leading Indian Ocean hub.

In a forward-looking step, the government of Madagascar has recently initiated work on a port expansion, consisting of breakwater construction, quay extension and yard expansion. According to MICTSL, this is a game-changer. Guido Heremans, General Manager of MICTSL explains: "Our new goal will be to double our volumes in the short term. The port extension will allow MICTSL to deploy the industry's newest super-post-panamax ship-to-shore cranes and enable vessels up to 16,000 containers to start calling Toamasina. Then the main lines from India or East Asia, that currently bypass Madagascar and go straight to South Africa in their routes to South America or West Africa, can call here and use Madagascar as a hub for transshipping cargo to other markets in the region. I firmly believe that, in the case of this expansion, if we create the offer, the demand will surely follow."

As President Rajoelina's administration accelerates its economic reform and investment programme, there is a growing optimism for the future of Madagascar. Heremans echoes this optimism, "MICTSL will continue to invest in the container terminal and improve our service levels. MICTSL is currently ranked 5th in productivity among sub-Saharan Africa's ports. With the port expansion and deployment of super-post-panamax cranes, we can be Africa's number one port and a leading Indian Ocean port hub".

www.mictsl.mg

What We Do, Every Day, All Year Round



STATE OF THE ART OPERATIONS: HANDLING MADAGASCAR'S TRADE WITH CARE

Madagascar International Container Terminal Services Ltd is the container terminal operator in the port of Toamasina, delivering 24/7 services in highest standards thanks to professional staff, modern and green equipment, state of the art IT system enabling full paperless transactions.



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**Madagascar
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An ICTSI Group Company

NextHope

Delivering High Quality IT Infrastructure

Looking For Continued Innovation To Keep Supporting Digitalisation In Madagascar

Originally a start-up founded by a handful of people, NextHope is today one of the country's IT expertise powerhouses.



"The growth of Africa on technological level is unavoidable. We need to follow the trend. Our policy is always the same: we focus on expertise."

**Tsilavo Ranarison,
CEO of NextHope**

Established in 2012 by a group of seven people with unrivalled passion and extensive experience in the telecommunications industry, NextHope initially focused on networks. Over the course of the following decade, however, the company outgrew its beginnings, earning a place in the sector's top tier, and expanded into domains of technology such as telecommunications, web meetings and company communication. "We were contacted by big developers like Microsoft, HP and Dell, which have motivated us to invest into skill development, so that we could be the first in terms of dimensions especially concerning IT infrastructure", says Tsilavo Ranarison, CEO of the company. "We are now into the development of the IT infrastructure of companies in terms of networks, security and endpoint." NextHope also operates in the field of ISP infrastructure installation, collaborating with Ericsson and Sagemcom to install network antennas for ISPs such as Telma and Orange Madagascar. The company also operates indirectly in several other African countries, cooperating with major IT players in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique.

Despite the many accomplishments achieved in its young existence, NextHope is constantly on the look for its next exciting challenge: "We will not stop innovating so that we can be the best," states Ranarison. "We have started with five people and now we have about 120 employees. Apart from geographical expansion, which we are already working on, in the future we want to be an IT expertise skill centre for the whole continent. We have an advantage with respect to the others."

The growth of Africa from a technological point of view is simply unavoidable, and NextHope aims to be at the forefront of the continental market's ongoing boom. The company always operates in accordance with its core policy, adds Ranarison. NextHope focuses on expertise to make sure Africa's development remains independent and autonomous, and invests in local capital and human resources to fulfil Madagascar's needs in terms of engineers and specialised workers.

As of today, Madagascar enjoys one of the fastest Internet speeds in Africa: an amazing achievement that could go a long way in terms of assisting the country's further development. "We are one of the pillars of the internet infrastructure in Madagascar," explains Ranarison. "We are the ones implementing the core network of operators. For us, this means a direct impact on the company. Internet expansion is a growth lever for NextHope because it brings bigger opportunities." One of the company's future challenges is supporting further broadband penetration in the country, to ensure Madagascar can fully benefit from its powerful IT infrastructure. "There are so many people that can be served and that is a big potential on which we count much," adds Ranarison.

The government of Madagascar recently decided to invest in the modernisation in the public sector, with a special focus on digitalisation, which has increased of about 200% over a mere two years. "It is a big challenge for us, it goes towards an improvement of the quality service of public services and it will change the way public workers do their job," says Ranarison. Moreover, the government made significant efforts to liberalise the IT sector, launching PPPs with private companies, which are more eager than ever to take part in the government's push for increased digitalisation. More specifically, NextHope is currently cooperating with the Ministry of Justice to modernise the IT infrastructure of judicial institutions.

The IT sector of Madagascar, in which NextHope plays a pivotal role, is extraordinarily motivated and bustling with activity, and offers innumerable opportunities to all potential investors: "All development projects started by government depend a lot on the private sector. There are plenty of projects. There is enormous potential," says Ranarison. "At NextHope, we have the expertise to follow the development of any organisation, be it public or private."



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Bridging The Financial Inclusion Gap And Creating Social Equality

MVOLA is changing the financial landscape in Madagascar with its revolutionary mobile money service, which is free for all with no bank account required.

Since its inception in 2010, MVOLA has continuously pursued innovation to become the leader in mobile money transfer in Madagascar. As a pioneer of the sector, MVOLA developed its service over the course of ten years and has collaborated with the Central Bank to get the country's first mobile money provider licence. Matthieu Mace, CEO of MVOLA says, "The Central Bank wants the country to be more financially inclusive, therefore open to new technologies, laws and prone to reducing barriers for the customers to get access to the service. With this support, we have been able to operate since 2010." MVOLA is independent and works with every bank, wiping out obstacles and restrictions for the unbanked. Mace says, "We are providing all basic services: cash in, cash out, local transfers and even exclusive international transfers through Western Union since 2011. We have developed a full mobile financial service set with all the main banks of the country, as well as with some international players. We also developed saving and loans. We do credit scoring in advance, which allows us to give our customers a certain amount of money upon request immediately and without guarantees." These endeavours have been wildly successful in reaching unbanked populations.

At MVOLA, innovation is key. "We have a different mindset," says Mace. "Customers will choose the best, and that is why we fearlessly challenge ourselves in maintaining leadership in the sector." These challenges have been fruitful. Over three million loans have been provided and more than five million mobile money accounts have been opened within ten years. The goal is to speed financial inclusion.

As part of this inclusion, MVOLA works toward social equality. In rural areas where banks are not available, unbanked populations face difficulties with being paid wages properly and on time. "We are complementary to the bank,"

says Mace. "While urban people may enjoy the benefit of having a bank account, a lot of people work in rural areas and suburbs with no banks. With mobile money, we are bringing in social equality. Unbanked staff get their full pay at the same time as banked ones in the company and without having to travel to withdraw their salaries."

In addition to bridging the financial inclusion gap, MVOLA focuses on CSR. "We are more than a operator, we go beyond, we work a lot with NGOs as well. In times of crisis, or natural calamities, we help them by facilitating the transfer of money. When there are work-for-money programmes, we make payments for them," Mace says. MVOLA is not just a matter of subscribing customers; it is about creating an ecosystem for all Malagasy. "We are proud to provide these services, though they are not our core business."

As evident by the success of MVOLA, Madagascar relies on robust telecom infrastructure, which covers 85% of the population thanks to Telma investments. The country's fibre cabling has a crucial role of bringing in a reliable internet connectivity. "Reliable international connectivity is key for anyone willing to invest in a country, and this is our strength. Today, we have more than 10,000 kilometres of optic fibre cable all over Madagascar to provide our customers with our best technology, Fibre Optic or Mobile 4G+." The country is proud to have a young and tech-savvy workforce. Mace states that Malagasy people are resilient, skilled at coding and customer service oriented.

With stable political conditions and outlook, Madagascar is potentially set to become more than an emergent country, a leader in the market. Mace says, "We have the biggest market in the Indian Ocean, one of the biggest in East Africa, and we will continue to grow. So, Madagascar is the promising place to invest in if you are looking at huge numbers of customers."



"We have a different mindset. Customers will choose the best, and that is why we fearlessly challenge ourselves in maintaining leadership in the sector."

**Matthieu Mace,
CEO of MVOLA**



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Aro Assurance is the largest player in the insurance sector of Madagascar and uses its position to help the economy grow and prosper.



“The objective of the insurance is to make people comfortable when they invest in something.”

**Zafiarisoa Rakouth,
General Director
of Aro Assurance**

Aro Assurance is an insurance company that is focused on providing insurance solutions for the people and corporate businesses of Madagascar. Their role in the economy is an important one, bringing a sense of security across sectors and facilitating entity growth. Zafiarisoa Rakouth, General Director of Aro Assurance, says, “The international community understands our position; it is up to us to upgrade the country. We have to make good efforts to expand. Insurance is a good portfolio investment.” As it stands, Aro Assurance is the first insurance company in Madagascar with 59% of the market. For this reason, Aro handles the risk management of many of the largest projects in the country.

Their strong competitive advantages allow them to maintain their high position in the market. “One of the strengths of our company is that we manage documents in English and talk with our international partners,” says Rakouth. Projections show that Aro will reach 144 billion Malagasy ariary in the upcoming year. An additional part of their role in the insurance sector includes managing premiums by following the fluctuation of MGA/USD. Rakouth reports, “When you convert the currency, it can change a lot based on how strong the ariary is in that moment.” Their attention to the international market places Aro Assurance in a position to lead Madagascar toward prosperity.

Rakouth also reports that President Andry Rajoelina has begun a project to build new infrastructure in the north of Antananarivo City and has enlisted Aro Assurance as a subsidiary that specialises in real estate. The objective, says Rakouth, is to create and nurture a ripple effect of growth. “We have a project to build houses to be sold to the population. The houses are going to be cyclone-resistant and insulated both for sound and weather. The price is not going to be very high: they will start at around 142,000 EUR (US\$ 156,500). In this way, we can manage ourselves and construct houses. We have other various activities such as the exploitation of

hotels, as well as a financial subsidiary for capital risk. The objective is to help new enterprises start.” These endeavours ensure that Aro is very active in the development of the country.

On a larger scale, Rakouth says that one of the challenges of the sector is that insurance does not always reach the people in the countryside of Africa. Aro Assurance is seeking methods to reach more remote populations and offer them services from which they can directly benefit. He says, “We are thinking about a product that can be easily distributed to countryside people in Madagascar. We want to create an insurance product for death. When someone dies, there are expenses that need to be covered. We could cover the burial of that specific person.” As for the corporate side of insurance, Aro is especially involved in infrastructure expansion. The company insures and covers the risk for the whole construction project. “Insurance has now been made compulsory; nobody can build a road without taking out insurance first,” says Rakouth. These help to protect projects and ensure that they are realised effectively. “The objective of the insurance is to make people comfortable when they invest in something.”

The implementation of the Emergence 2030 Plan of Madagascar has realigned the country on the road to progress. As the blueprint for economic development, the insurance sector and Aro Assurance are searching for new opportunities to grow and aid fellow sectors in order to facilitate growth throughout the entire country. These ambitious goals are ensuring that Madagascar is in a prime position for investment. Rakouth says, “The country is in a good and reliable situation now. No one is interested in investing in a country with civil unrest, and we do not have that. Politically speaking, the government is stable. People are now interested in Madagascar. People have to believe that it is the right moment to work together and make the country rise. Now is the right moment.”



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Madagascar Oil

Fearlessly Overcoming Challenges

Madagascar Oil Integrated To The East African Energy Corridor Development

As the country's leading oil and gas company, Madagascar Oil is ready to transform the sector with the Tsimiroro oilfield and make Madagascar a major oil exporter.

Madagascar Oil's medium-term master plan includes the development of the downstream and petroleum logistics hub in Narinda Bay, one of the world's deepest and biggest natural harbour, northwest of Madagascar. This master plan will make Narinda Bay into the petroleum production and trading hub for East African markets with feedstock from Madagascar Oil. The location can be easily reached from Madagascar Oil's production site.

THE EAST AFRICAN ENERGY CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT (EAECD)

Madagascar Oil and Madagascar have the unique potential to become the petroleum production and trading hub to supply East African markets, similar to Singapore (GDP US\$370 billion) being the hub for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) markets. Integrating itself into the ASEAN bigger economy population of 630 million (GDP+ US\$3 trillion) has accelerated Singapore's economic development and GDP. Madagascar can integrate its small economy (GDP US\$15 billion) to the bigger East African energy markets (the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) with a population of 400million, GDP of US\$800 billion. This will accelerate Madagascar's economic development, an energy export driven strategy, replicating Singapore's success, in addition to lowering its domestic energy cost to create a competitive domestic economy. EAECD encompasses what will become the three biggest oil and gas producers: Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania, with a planned investment of US\$30-40 billion and potential synergies in this corridor development.

Fifty years ago the master planners of Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew had the foresight to make Singapore a petroleum and petrochem hub for ASEAN, the same strategy can transform Madagascar. This energy and economic integration, EAECD, can accelerate Madagascar's economic development.

Presently East Africa imports over 700Kbpd (thousands of barrels per day) of high cost fuel products from Middle East, at a cost of US\$25 billion per year, this can now be produced



within EAECD to accelerate the region's development. Lower energy cost has a positive impact on economic development and growth per capita income.

MADAGASCAR OIL: HIGH VALUE DEVELOPMENT

Singapore is the world's biggest bunkering centre with an annual turnover of US\$20 billion, a significant contributor to its GDP. Madagascar Oil's crude oil is very low in sulphur (0.3%), the plan is to blend it and supply the shipping sector with the new IMO2020 (0.5% sulphur) spec fuel at premium price over Brent. There's a shortage of up to 2 to 3million bpd of LSF0 (low sulphur fuel oil), the largest fuel market disruption in our lifetime. Global shipping consumes 5% of crude production, but generates 40% of sulphur pollution. Madagascar Oil's initial production peaks at 100kbpd, greater than US\$2 billion in annual revenue, about 15% of Madagascar's present GDP. It will be the top two contributors to GDP growth in the country, the other contributor is a cobalt/nickel miner. Narinda Bay can be developed into a major bunkering hub, with strategic location along major shipping routes.

Elizabeth Oliver (Editor)

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The Billionaire's Startup

The world is awash in streaming services, and Meg Whitman already had her fortune — but then Jeffrey Katzenberg came calling with a mobile-focused startup. With nearly \$1.8 billion raised and America on lockdown, consumers may have no choice but to try Quibi.

BY DAWN CHMIELEWSKI



Back Together:

Quibi's CEO, Meg Whitman, and chairman, Jeffrey Katzenberg, at their Los Angeles headquarters. "I joke that if we were 20 years younger, we might have killed each other by now," Whitman says. "Now we only want Quibi to win."

MINUTES AFTER MEG Whitman announced she was stepping down as CEO of Hewlett Packard Enterprise in November 2017, her phone rang. It was Jeffrey Katzenberg, whom she has known since they both worked for Disney in the late 1980s and early 1990s — Whitman was in strategic planning; Katzenberg ran the film studio. "What are you doing?" Whitman remembers her friend asking. "I don't know," she replied.

"I'm the chairman of Teach for America. I'll probably do stuff with my husband and travel." She continues: "He goes, 'No. What are you doing *tonight*?' And I said, 'Knowing you, Jeffrey, I'm having dinner with you.'"

Katzenberg flew to Silicon Valley and, over dinner at Nobu in Palo Alto, pitched his idea for bringing high-caliber entertainment to mobile phones. For Whitman, the idea checked all her boxes: The potential market for the service was huge, prevailing trends were right and it occupied a unique niche.

"I ultimately said, 'You know what? I think I have another startup in me,'" says Whitman, 63, who first got rich (she's worth \$3.3 billion) working with another visionary founder, Pierre Omidyar. She helped build eBay from 30 employees and \$4 million in revenue when she joined in 1998 to more than 15,000 employees and \$8 billion in revenue when she left a decade later.

"We're pioneering into a space that only exists because of two things: YouTube, and Steve Jobs and the iPhone," Katzenberg says. "Those two things have now created a new piece of real estate, and that real estate is 7 in the morning until 7 at night... That's the thing that's exciting to me."

Two years after that dinner, Quibi (an awkward portmanteau of *quick* and *bites*) is poised to launch its mobile streaming service offering original movies, reality TV, comedies and news edited into bite sized nuggets of 10 minutes or less, optimized for viewing on phones.

Many in Hollywood think it's a terrible idea. At a time when viewers are awash in entertainment options, many of them free, who is going to pay for another? "If I'm going to watch *Game of Thrones* in eight-minute

chunks, what's the difference between what he's doing and me hitting the pause button?" scoffs one powerful Hollywood insider, who requested anonymity because his clients sell shows to Quibi. Barry Diller, perhaps the greatest Hollywood visionary of his generation, recently called Quibi a "gutsy speculation" for his former protégé (Katzenberg, 69, worked for Diller at Paramount in the '70s). "He's so naked out there with this."

It's not a new idea. Back in 1999, Katzenberg tried something similar with Pop.com, which was supposed to deliver short animated and live-action films across the internet. With the technology for viable video streaming still in its infancy, it was an uncertain notion at best. Despite being backed by Steven Spielberg, David Geffen, Brian Grazer, Ron Howard and Paul Allen, Pop.com was dead within a year.

This time around, Katzenberg raised enough money to play it out, including \$1 billion in August 2018 from the likes of Alibaba, Disney and Sony. It fortuitously wrapped up a \$750 million follow-on round in March, just days before the coronavirus froze the country. "I've never seen an environment change this fast," Whitman says. "Every day is a new day, with new data and new concerns." Luckily, Kevin Hart and Jennifer Lopez already finished work on their shows, and Spielberg has a movie in the works, attracted by a "cash plus" deal that lets them retain rights to their material. After two years, they can stitch together their "quick bites" and release them as a full-length movie.

Inadvertently, America's lockdown might have created the perfect moment for Quibi. Nielsen projects media viewing will spike by as much as 60% due to COVID-19. People will certainly know it's available: Quibi is spending a gargantuan \$400 million to promote its new service and in mid-March announced that it will offer the service free for three months.

"This is a moment in time in which we have a chance to do something that is putting some happiness and some joy and some fun and some laughter into people's hands," Katzenberg says.

Quibi also has the advantage of being loaded with fresh content just as the production of all new shows and movies has been stilled by the pandemic. Quibi has been stockpiling programming since last September in anticipation of a possible writer's strike, fearing a replay of 2008, when a union walkout halted new production for 100 days.

The service debuts on April 6 with 50 original shows, including movies offered in cliff-hanger chapters such as the thriller *Survive*, starring Sophie Turner (*Game of Thrones*) and Corey Hawkins (*BlacKkKlansman*); 120 reality shows and documentaries; plus news, weather and sports. In all, Quibi promises to deliver 8,500 quick bites from 175 shows in its first year.

But the \$1.8 billion question remains: Will anyone pay to watch them? Some Hollywood players are adopting a "DBA Jeffrey" — Don't Bet Against Jeffrey — attitude.

"Jeffrey has only taken a couple of big swings in his life, and he's hit it out of the park," says a senior executive at one of Hollywood's major talent agencies. "If you had blindly bet on Jeffrey Katzenberg for the past 30 years, you'd have made a lot of money." 

Empty Roads, OCCUPIED MINDS

With a deadly virus still lurking in the streets and tougher times ahead, traders in South Africa's colorful townships desperately look to resuscitate their businesses with creative offerings online.

BY MOTLABANA MONNAKGOTLA



Will South Africa's historic Vilakazi Street ever be the same again?

IT'S ALMOST TWO MONTHS INTO LOCKDOWN IN South Africa and the country's townships, once bustling hubs of trade, are slowly bracing themselves, with every ounce of willpower left in them, for the unprecedented reality that is 'the new normal'.

For many, the national shutdown and closed shutters have meant lost jobs, stalled incomes and empty pockets, not to mention a deadly virus stalking them in every street and alley. The small entrepreneurs here – the lifeblood of any economy – now on their last pennies, are still hopeful their re-evaluated strategies and revamped resilience will see them through this fearful nightmare, as the restrictions ease

and the townships will slowly crawl back to life again.

Behind the respectful veneer of the lockdown, some of the smaller traders hustle on illegally, under the radar, dodging police patrols and armed surveillance. They have no choice but to stick to their street-smart ways, to survive and feed their families.

In the township of Soweto, bigger, popular establishments such as The Box Shop on Vilakazi Street – the historic stretch home to Nobel Peace Prize winners Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the country's former President Nelson Mandela – are looking to the future with great uncertainty, and have been forced to devise alternative digital strategies as lifelines for the present.

Sifiso Moyo founded The Box Shop, a lifestyle and retail outlet

with his business partner, Bernard Msimango, and today, the street it's located on, which attracted thousands of local and international tourists every day prior to the pandemic, is eerily quiet.

It will be a while until planes of international visitors land again, so the duo have chosen to go to them – online.

“For The Box Shop, we built hype around online and have taken the entire offering that existed in our physical infrastructure into a digital platform and that has made us into an innovation space, giving us access to a global audience. We are beginning to see our products being sold in places like Switzerland and the United Kingdom and we now have started harnessing partnerships,” says Moyo.

The website was launched in May, but the bigger vision for the entity was to start as a retail outlet and work backwards into the manufacturing space.

Moyo says the coronavirus taught them two things – to adapt digitally, and to work in the value chain.

The shop now also makes face masks, sold to public hospitals and NGOs.

A short drive from Vilakazi Street is a restaurant named Sancho, selling African cuisine and founded by Thato Mothopeng, a serial entrepreneur who also founded the popular annual Soweto Camp Festival.

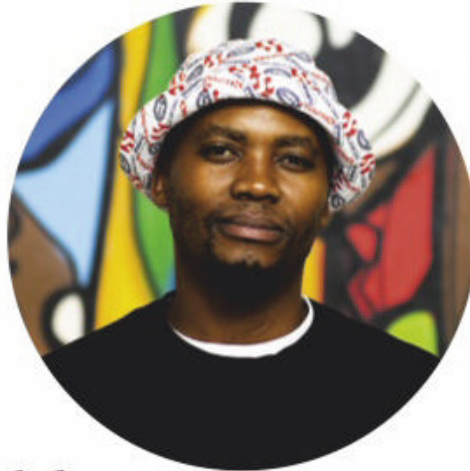
Mothopeng is one of the few entrepreneurs in the tourism sector without a formal degree or training, but has had a roaring business nevertheless and is quite well-known in the circuit.

Mothopeng says all SMMEs are at a standstill because business thrives on human contact. But business also needs to be flexible, he adds.

“There are opportunities in the harshest environments. I am using this time to review my strategies. I am also not panicking because the country is managing the crisis; this is an opportunity for SMMEs to reflect because our people are sober now.”

He had to let go of a few employees and is working remotely.

Further in the township of Soweto, Thembeke Nkosi, the founder of Le Salon, has



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There are opportunities in the harshest environments... This is an opportunity for SMMEs to reflect because our people are sober now.

– Thato Mothopeng



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If the business fails, I fail. If I don't come out of my down moment quick, then I fail and the entire organization fails.

– Lesego Seloane

also developed her own coping mechanisms.

Her shop is shut, but people still seek her grooming advice. As per South Africa's Level 4 lockdown restrictions, salons and beauty parlors are not allowed to operate.

“This [lockdown] is very stressful, more especially now because other businesses are operating. I still can't make money, I still have to stay at home and not work,” rues Nkosi.

In addition to getting to spend more time with her five-year-old son, she has recently started sharing her haircare tutorials on social media.

“Now that shops are open to buy hair products, I send video clips to my clients and that brings me joy, knowing that I am still useful to them; even though it's not making me any money yet, at least I am interacting with my clients,” she says, looking at the bright side.

Ronewa Creations is yet another small business in these parts.

Founded by Lesego Seloane and Dinah Kgeledi, the business offers landscaping services, garden maintenance and water harvesting solutions, and employs seven full-time workers. None of these services are allowed in the current phase of lockdown.

“Now that our province is still on Level 4, it is really difficult to focus because when we were working out our plans, there was so much uncertainty and we didn't know how they could actually be implemented,” says Seloane.

She is grateful the duo have been active on social media, running a garden makeover campaign and offering landscaping designs for free.

“We are using a three-dimensional technology that revamps the look of gardens to give people an idea of how their gardens could potentially look like in the end.”

Despite the challenges, the two keep sane by spending time with family.

“If the business fails, I fail. If I don't come out of my down moment quick, then I will fail and the entire organization fails,” says Seloane.

You can detect the determination in her voice to overcome this period, come what may.

Like many around her staring fear in the face, she has no other choice. 

‘WFH’ Here To Stay?

The home will be hub and flexible working the norm. The result? Renewed employee trust, wellness and cost savings, say more companies.

BY NAFISA AKABOR



EVEN THE WORDS OUT-OF-THE-BOX SEEM OUT of date at a time when shipping containers are turning into ICU hospitals and arms firms are making ventilators and personal protective equipment.

If technology is being repurposed, so too homes and humans.

Over the last few months the world over, the pandemic-induced ‘new normal’ has seen homes turning into head offices, with the volatile economy forcing businesses to rethink long-term strategies in a work from home (WFH) environment that looks here to stay.

Even the big corporates say this could extend post-pandemic.

Barclays CEO Jes Staley said its staff will not revert fully to its pre-January work habits. “There will be a long-term adjustment in how we think about our location strategy; the notion of putting 7,000 people in a building may be a thing of the past,” he said after

the company reported its first quarter profits for 2020.

Internet giant Google said all staff are expected to work from home until 2021, according to a May 2020 report in *Bloomberg*. Similarly, Facebook will let staff work remotely through 2020. Twitter, on the other hand, announced a short while later it would let staff work from home “forever”.

Euromonitor International’s Global Consumer Trends 2020 report has highlighted areas that Covid-19 will have an impact for the year ahead. Some of these include multi-functional homes where, in the long-term, the home becomes the hub and businesses will adapt accordingly; private personalization, which will put privacy concerns on hold in the short term but will return in the long term; and inclusivity for all would see disabled communities benefitting from technology.

In South Africa, the government has stipulated five levels of lockdown dictating how businesses may be carried out, including which sectors can operate as levels change. This requires flexibility and being able to adapt from one week to the other.

Jordan Rittenberry, Edelman Africa CEO, says the company's transition towards more flexible working policies has been sped up by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the process has been a success with renewed trust in employees.

"We believe that flexibility, particularly in the current environment, is a useful way for companies to treat their staff right and foster mutual trust," he tells FORBES AFRICA. "The pandemic has required a rapid mind-set change as companies take on new responsibilities towards the people that work for them and employee wellness is the first port of call as we navigate these uncharted waters.

"Every crisis presents opportunities and new ways of doing things. The shift we are seeing now is one of those that could help to meaningfully improve employer-employee relationships if managed carefully.

"As more people work from home, we will naturally require less space over time and this will yield cost savings to the business that can be passed on to clients.

"Besides employee costs, real estate is our biggest expense," he says.

Pieter Bensch, Executive Vice President at Sage Middle East and Africa, has come to a similar conclusion. "We realized that we do not need as much office space going forward and working remotely using cloud technology tools has maintained productivity levels from our colleagues," says Bensch to FORBES AFRICA.

"Our entire workforce began working remotely before lockdown and are in no rush to return until it is safe but have encouraged video calls so they can see each other.

"Our cloud accounting and payroll product sales have increased, which is a clear indication that our customers now understand the power and benefits of cloud solutions to maintain business continuity."



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The pandemic has required a rapid mind-set change as companies take on new responsibilities towards the people that work for them.

– Jordan Rittenberry, CEO, Edelman Africa



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We realized that we do not need as much office space going forward and working remotely using cloud technology tools has maintained productivity levels.

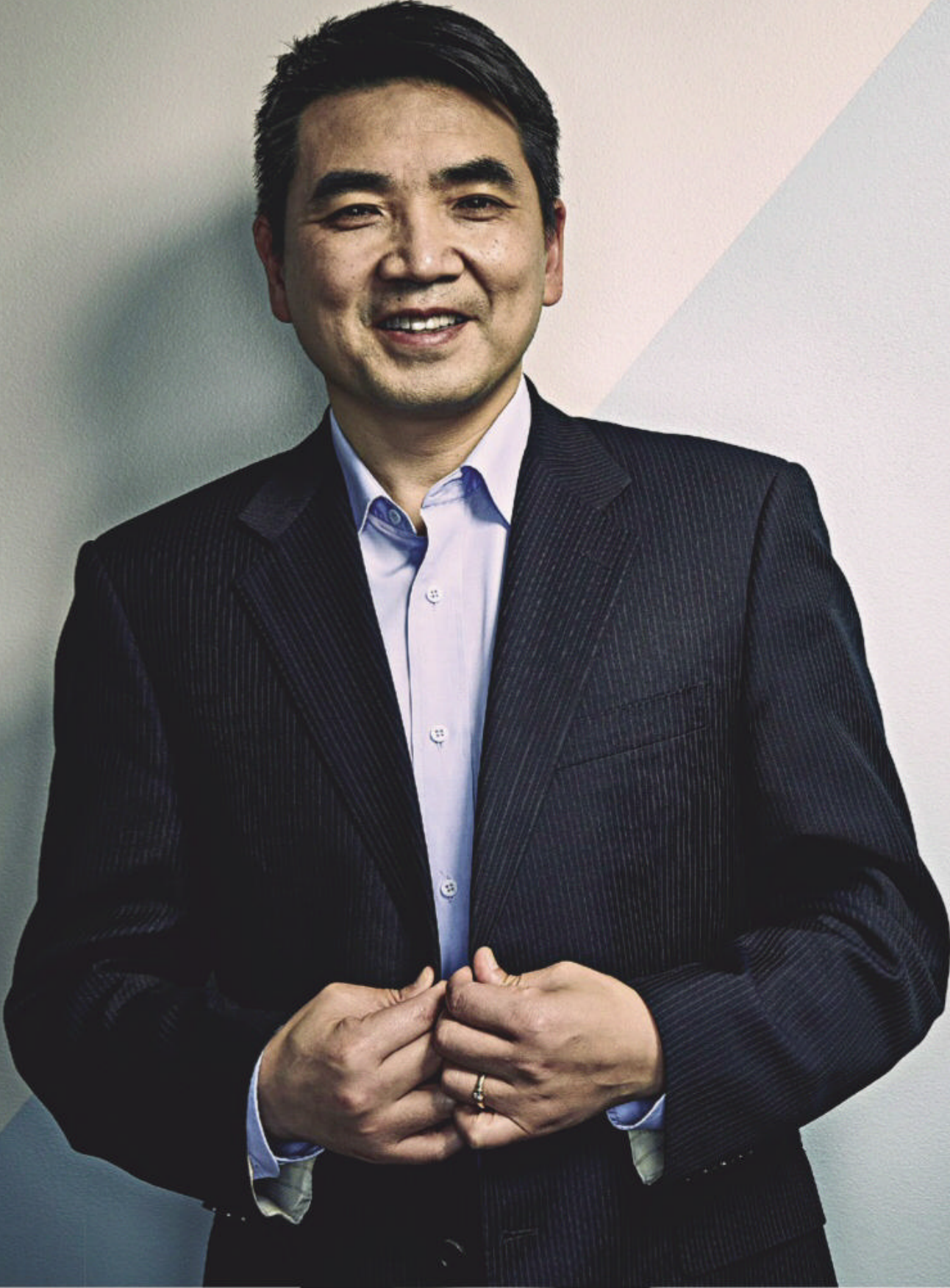
– Pieter Bensch, Executive Vice President, Sage Middle East and Africa

The mental wellbeing of employees has also been top priority. "All Sage colleagues received a free subscription to Headspace, a brilliant award-winning app and guide to everyday mindfulness," adds Bensch. The company also formed a 'Family@Sage' community for staff looking for peer support on how to adapt with differing family needs and challenges.

A Johannesburg-based agency called BetterWork that specializes in design thinking for human resources has been hosting weekly lunchtime Zoom calls since the beginning of lockdown in South Africa. Attendees include a mix of its professional network, members of The GoodWork Society and other members of the general public. Some of its takeaways have proven that WFH is more productive than working in the office, which cited minimal distractions and the extra hours gained from not having to sit in traffic. Additionally, introverts seem to be thriving and tend to feel more comfortable with contributions to teamwork. On the other hand, BetterWork says parents on the call have expressed being overwhelmed with not just their own work but also the additional responsibility of being teacher-guides to their children.

The company believes the home-office is now the responsibility of the employer where people-focused services such as tele-therapy, support for parents and social programs become an additional duty to ensure a healthy, productive team. It adds that an obvious benefit would be the compensation or subsidizing of laptops, stable internet connectivity, webcams, etc.

Palesa Sibeko, Co-founder of BetterWork, says offices are typically expertly assessed and constructed to suit an organization's work activity needs, but the same is not true for the millions of homes that are now acting as places of work. "There is not a concerted effort to view home-work life more holistically, to identify the needs and address them to create environments conducive to doing great work." BetterWork says it is currently looking into how to support organizations on this important mission. 

A portrait of Eric Yuan, founder of Zoom, smiling and wearing a dark pinstripe suit over a light blue shirt. His hands are clasped in front of him. The background is a light grey wall with a diagonal pink and blue geometric design.

Eric Yuan is helping millions of people survive social distancing by giving away his videoconferencing tool, Zoom, for free. The move is earning him much respect, and when the pandemic has passed, the billionaire's business will likely be stronger than ever. But in the midst of a global crisis, can his app withstand a 610% spike in traffic virtually overnight and the scrutiny of primetime?

BY ALEX KONRAD

zoom

Ka Boom!

ZOOM CEO ERIC YUAN'S KIDS finally care about what he does for a living. Sure, they were there that morning in April 2019 when Yuan, the founder of the world's most popular videoconferencing company, rang the opening bell at Nasdaq, with Zoom's stock-market debut making him a billionaire. But it wasn't until a Monday in mid-March that Yuan's eighth-grade daughter, forced by the coronavirus to go to school remotely, finally had a question about her father's work. "My daughter had never asked what I'm doing," Yuan says, beaming. "For the first time, she stopped by to say, 'Dad, how do you raise your hand in Zoom?'"

Yuan's son, a college freshman, has become an emergency Zoom user, too. "I told my son, 'I finally realized why I was working so hard,'" Yuan says. "I realized, 'Maybe I built these tools just for you to use in your online class now.'" This newfound respect still wasn't enough to stop either kid from battling for the family's Wi-Fi with Dad, jokes Yuan, 50.

Welcome to the new work-from-home family life: conducted, increasingly, over Zoom. As the coronavirus ravages the planet, leading to quarantined cities, states sheltering in place and schools and universities closing down worldwide, Zoom has emerged as one of the leading tools to keep businesses up and running, students learning and people connected through virtual birthday parties, happy hours and yoga classes.

On the last Saturday of March, nearly 3 million people globally downloaded the Zoom app on their mobile devices for the first time — a record for the company, bringing the number of downloads since its April 2019 IPO to more than 59 million, according to mobile intelligence firm Apptopia. Zoom recently ranked No. 1 among all free apps on Apple's App Store, ahead of Google, WhatsApp and even Gen Z favorite TikTok. None of that accounts for the millions who tune in via laptop or desktop computer.

All of this has pushed Zoom, based in San Jose, California, into a new financial stratosphere. Its shares are up 143% since the IPO and 44% in the last month — a time when the S&P 500 fell 11% — giving the company a market cap of \$42 billion and Yuan a net worth of \$5.5 billion, making him one of the richest self-made newcomers on this year's Forbes Billionaires list. Even before the spread of Covid-19, Zoom was on a tear, with at least 81,000 paying

customers, including Samsung and Walmart. It posted revenues of \$623 million and net profits of \$25 million through its fiscal year ending January 2020, up 88% and 234%, respectively.

Zoom isn't just a darling of Wall Street. It's a social-media phenomenon. On Twitter, TikTok and elsewhere, Zoom has gone viral — quite a feat for a piece of business software. "Just got an email from a prof: 'As a reminder, you are required to wear clothes during Zoom meetings.' Rules are made when they become necessary, not before," one Twitter user quipped, getting more than 85,000 likes. Joked another, to 21,000 likes: "Lol you thought you were better than me cause you went to Harvard??? We're all attending Zoom University now." (The real Harvard is conducting all of its remaining classes on, what else, Zoom.)

Much of the Zoom boom is fueled by Yuan's decision to provide unlimited free access — first to affected regions in China and then, in mid-March, to all schools shut down in the United States, Italy and Japan. He's since expanded the offer to schools in at least 19 other countries; around 84,000 have signed up. Add to that millions of new individual users taking advantage of Zoom's complimentary 40-minute video chats (available to any individual or group with fewer than 100 participants), which were already free before the pandemic. Zoom won't say how much money all this free service is costing, but Stifel analyst Tom Roderick estimates the additional tab at \$30 million to \$50 million. And all those people are sucking up costly bandwidth — meaning Zoom is likely having to invest in public cloud resources as a stopgap, estimates Sterling Auty, an analyst at JPMorgan Equity Research. Zoom says its infrastructure can already support 8 billion meeting minutes per month: "In the case of an unprecedented, massive influx of demand, we have the ability to access and deploy tens of thousands of servers within hours." While Yuan's generosity might be expensive in the short-term, it will undoubtedly pay off richly for Zoom, which is already well on its way to becoming the generic term for videoconferencing, much as the brand names Xerox, Kleenex and Google are for their products. (According to its S-1, the majority of its top customers in 2018 had started out with a free account.) Zoom's biggest challenge now is not how to make money but ensuring that its systems don't crash under the weight of millions of new users or collapse under the spotlight.

"It was not a hard decision," Yuan says. "When we thought about this decision, we were very excited. We know that whatever problems we face, we will overcome. Cost, our public company gross margin, our capacity: Everything else is secondary."

The son of mining engineers in China's eastern Shandong Province, Yuan grew up fascinated by entrepreneurs like Bill Gates. After graduating from Shandong University Science & Technology with a degree in applied mathematics in 1991, he decided to head to America. Before his departure, U.S. Customs asked for an English language version of his business card. It listed Yuan as a consultant, and he was misunderstood to be a part-time contractor. His visa

was denied. For the next year and a half, the now-skeptical immigration services would deny him seven more times. But Yuan refused to give up.

He eventually made it to California and got a job at Webex, an early player in web-conferencing and videoconferencing applications. It was acquired by Cisco in 2007, and Yuan left four years and four months later, disillusioned by the quality of the service. He started to build Zoom and began offering to hook up some in-need organizations and institutions, such as the University of San Francisco, for free.

Now that altruistic impulse is taking on global importance as Zoom has become vital for the work-from-home economy. But it's far from the only company stepping up to meet this trend — and standing to profit later. Google and Microsoft also announced they were opening up more free features for their own classroom and videoconferencing tools. RingCentral, a Belmont, California-based cloud communications company, and Newsela, a New York City-based ed-tech firm, are two of a host of lesser-known players doing the same.

But likely no other company has signed up so many new users, so fast. How can Zoom possibly keep up? “Is your platform prepared for practically every college class in America to be using it? Simultaneously? Asking for a whole lot of friends,” said Adrienne Keene, an assistant professor of American studies at Brown University, via Twitter. “It’s unrealistic to expect we can just transfer class to a Zoom call and things will be fine,” she later emails Forbes, noting that some students live internationally, have spotty Wi-Fi or have no quiet space at home.

“However, I am looking forward to seeing their faces and hearing their voices.” Yuan is not worried. He’s confident in Zoom’s infrastructure, and his team is working on other work-from-home- and study-from-home-inspired features, from better face lighting to a lecture tool for professors, while he continues to roll out Zoom to as many affected schools as his team can handle. “I feel like overnight, this is one of the catalysts where in every country, everybody’s realized they needed to have a tool like Zoom to connect their people,” Yuan says. “I think from that perspective, we feel very proud. We’ve seen that what we are doing here, we can contribute a bit to the world.”

Yuan may not have predicted all the ways Zoom would facilitate a social-distancing lifestyle. But the company started to brace itself for huge changes when Covid-19 first disrupted business in China beginning in January. At that time, customers such as Walmart and Dell reached out with concerns, Yuan says, wondering if their local employees would be able to move full-time to communications through Zoom. In the run-up to going public, Zoom had trained its staff on responses to natural disasters, though the company didn’t anticipate that the disaster en route would be a pandemic.

Zoom’s 17 data centers were designed to handle traffic surges of up to 100x, Yuan says. “The beautiful part of the cloud is, you know, it is unlimited capacity, in theory,” he says. And with engineering teams across the globe, including in China and Malaysia, Zoom has the technical chops to be able to remotely monitor its systems around the clock.

Still, some Zoom users have noticed dips in video quality, or had difficulty connecting in the first place. Zoom’s online help center is experiencing the dreaded “longer wait times than normal.” On March 23, Zoom’s service page acknowledged that some users of its free service were reporting problems with starting and joining meetings. That’s not surprising, given that daily active mobile users jumped 610% in the last two months, per Apptopia. It’s not just Zoom’s challenge. The internet as a whole is straining from so many people now living entirely online, says Morgan Kurk, CTO of communications technology firm CommScope. His recommendation: Schedule your Zoom — or any virtual meeting — roughly 15 minutes past the hour

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I feel like overnight, this is one of the catalysts where in every country, everybody’s realized they needed to have a tool like Zoom to connect their people.

to avoid the virtual rush.

With ubiquity has come more scrutiny from security and privacy researchers. In late March, Vice Media’s tech-news site, Motherboard, revealed that Zoom was sending data to Facebook, even if users didn’t have a Facebook account. Zoom said the outflow was limited to metadata — what type of device you were using, the size of your screen, what language and time zone you were in. One day after the news broke, Yuan wrote an apologetic blog post explaining that the program had allowed users to log in via Facebook, and that code had now been removed.

Zoom collects user data only to the extent it’s absolutely necessary, it says, to provide “technical and operational support” — in other words, to ensure your meeting’s audio and video are working smoothly. One school in Colorado says it won’t use Zoom, citing concerns about how its data would be used and who controls it long-term. Zoom does not have the ability to monitor anyone’s conversations or meetings in real time, says global risk and compliance officer Lynn Haaland, who recently joined the company from PepsiCo. And while Zoom has also caught flak for an attention-tracking tool that can tell administrators who turn it on when attendees have opened something else over the Zoom meeting for more than 30 seconds, Haaland says that Zoom does not track what users have open besides Zoom. “We are committed to protecting the privacy and security of students’ data, as we are all with all customers,”

she says. What about protecting users from hackers?

On March 30, the office of New York Attorney General Letitia James sent a letter to Zoom outlining several privacy concerns, including whether the surge in users made the platform more vulnerable to hackers. “During the Covid-19 pandemic, we are working around the clock to ensure that hospitals, universities, schools and other businesses across the world can stay connected and operational,” Zoom said in a statement sent to Forbes. “We appreciate the New York attorney general’s engagement on these issues and are happy to provide her with the requested information.”

In his temporary home-office headquarters, Yuan says demand has pushed him into a 7.30AM to 11.30PM work routine: “I just feel busier at home. My mom [who lives with us] keeps asking me, ‘How come you have meetings like this every day? You missed lunch!’ ”

He does find time to check social media, where he has long been known to respond to individual user concerns and vow to look into problems himself. “It’s not something to distract myself. . . . This is part of our business operation,” Yuan says. “At the start of a company like Zoom, there are problems every day. Do you want to know, or do you want to hide? I want to know.”

Some of this has led to improvements such as better virtual backgrounds and a default setting for teachers that locks their students’ screens so they can’t hijack the lesson as a prank. Zoom has also rolled out new capabilities, like a tune-up feature inspired by consumer apps that touches up one’s face and lighting. It is also working on a tool for collegesized classes that would make it so that every student’s video would appear as though shot from the same angle.

Still, Yuan says he wakes up in the middle of the night worrying if Zoom is doing enough. Some schools in some parts of the world that want Zoom don’t yet have it. And the company has made the decision not to offer a similar program to nonprofits or other needy programs. Yuan says that while K-12 school email addresses are easy to verify, there’s no good way for Zoom to automatically review and approve the rest.

What happens to Zoom after the pandemic passes? Analysts expect its stock, trading at a nosebleed multiple to projected revenues, to fall back to earth somewhat as people go back to the office, but see the virus as a “wake up call” for businesses that will save on rent and commuting time by shifting more permanently to work-from-home.

Zoom should be able to turn many free users into paying ones — and profit — in the long run, says RBC analyst Alex Zukin. “Zoom is being a good corporate citizen,” adds JPMorgan Equity Research’s Sterling Auty. “They are not looking to take unfair advantage. We think that goodwill carries a long way.”

Yuan says he has frozen all projects and plans that don’t contribute directly to keeping Zoom running — and helping students — through the crisis. He has instructed his executives not to ramp up sales or marketing to benefit from Zoom’s current boost. He also approved a bonus for all Zoom employees as they work overdrive through the surge in usage, equivalent to two weeks’ pay. “I told the team that with



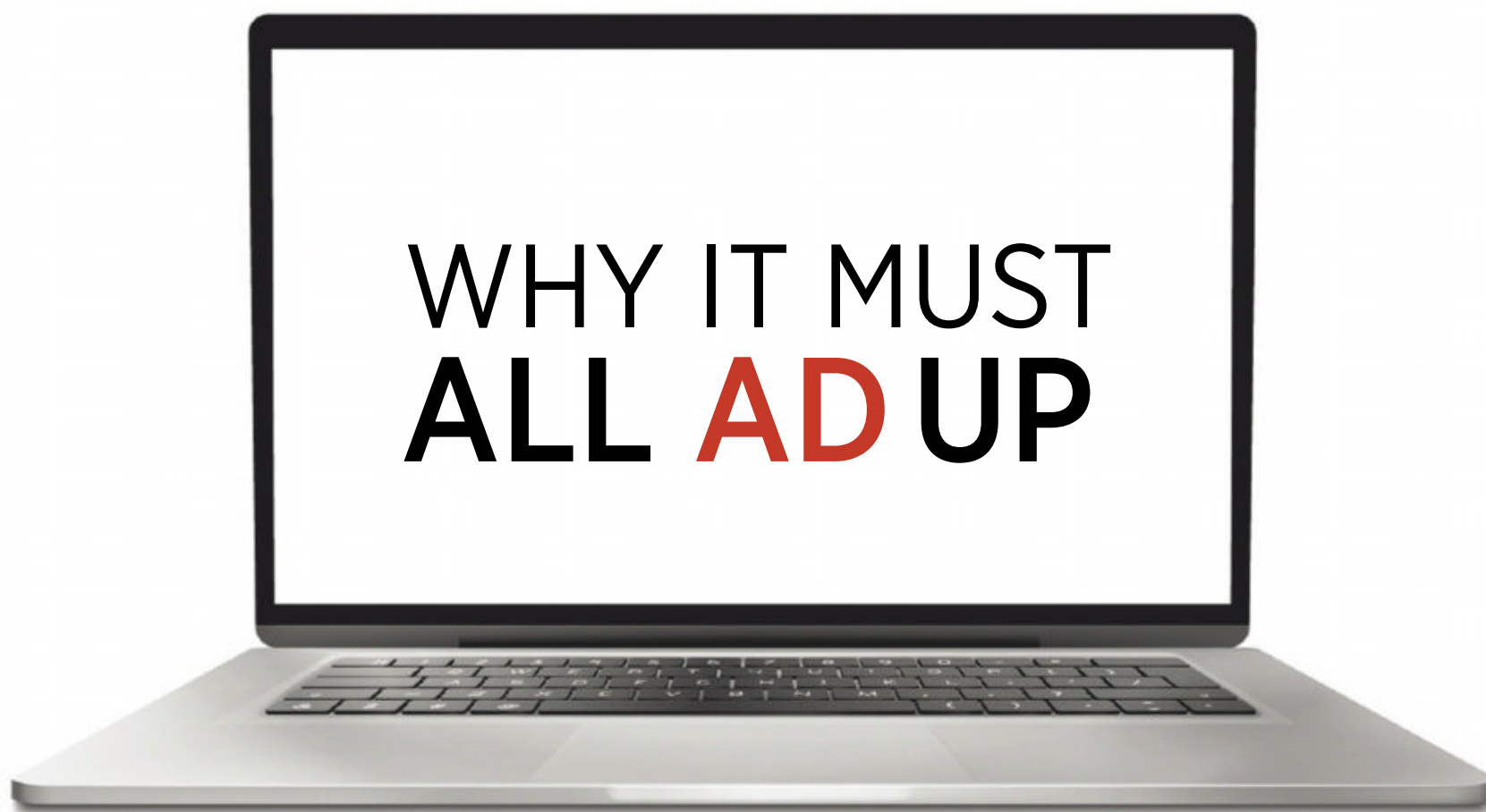
Yuan’s neighborhood kindergarten teacher James Baldwin reads a children’s book to his students from his home in Brookline, Massachusetts, a Boston suburb



Zoom’s Latin America team enjoys a virtual happy hour

any crisis like this, let’s not leverage the opportunity for marketing or sales. Let’s focus on our customers,” Yuan says.

“If you leverage this opportunity for money, I think that’s a horrible culture.” **F**



With Covid-19 emphasizing the human element in advertising, brands should re-evaluate their strategies and reframe their messaging to stay relevant. Saying nothing is wrong too, add experts.

BY SAMANTHA STEELE

“HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THE BIGGEST global conversation taking place?” asks Robert Grace, Founding Partner: Head Of Strategy, at M&C Saatchi Abel, an integrated advertising agency with branches across Africa. “How are you actually going to match what you’re talking about with action?”

This is where advertising’s role becomes interesting, far from simply acting like a loudspeaker to products, or putting out mushy messages to engender brand loyalty.

How has marketing had to help brands pivot their messaging at this time?

The global pandemic is influencing every aspect of life. “I’ve never heard the word ‘unprecedented’ used so much. We’ve used so much hyperbolic language in this time,” says Grace.

From changing work cultures, to countries in lockdown facing economic crises, Covid-19 is impacting everyone in

tangible ways. For agencies and by extension, brands, to pretend it’s not happening or go on with business as normal, reads as tone-deaf at best and disingenuous and ruthless at worst.

With that in mind, some brands have opted for silence, fearful of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. “Saying the wrong thing is unforgivable – the consumer is smarter than they’ve ever been. You could have been in the right place but one wrong move could send you backwards,” explains Khuthala Gala-Holten, Managing Director at Joe Public in Johannesburg.

The risk of saying the wrong thing is paired with the risk of saying nothing at all. “Many brands have paused spending now, which is not the best thing to do, because people expect brands to play a role. 88% of consumers want brands to talk to them now,” says Shaun Frazao, Head of Digital at Wavemaker. The data backs this up – according to email service provider Everlytic, their March 2020 open rate was really high: 55.3 million unique opens.

Others that are still “talking” are dramatically pivoting on their marketing messages and communications.

Photos supplied; Image from Freepik



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From the creative perspective, in a way, the ‘new normal’ is very exciting.

– Khuthala Gala-Holten

“Whatever you say has to be authentic and not seen as a marketing opportunity,” explains Grace.

“There are some brands that should be going into quarantine over this period – don’t use this ‘opportunity’ to sell, rather use the time to refine your strategy. So that when you go back into the market, you demonstrate that you’ve understood what consumers will be wanting from your brand.”

Gala-Holten adds: “Strategy first – what are the guardrails? Sometimes clients have several agencies. So you really need to empower them with guardrails. This is now the ‘new normal’ – we will never be the same. From the creative perspective, in a way, it’s very exciting.”

Across sub-Saharan Africa, we’re seeing six key themes in communications and advertising, explains Frazao (*see sidebar*). “Consumer centricity needs to be first. Brands that are communicating now are looking

long-term, to build trust, and not short-term at the sales they could make.”

Every agency interviewed for this article has seen a combination of two trends: contracts shrinking as businesses struggle to make money, and a shift to digital marketing.

“The way business has been done will change in the advertising world.

We have been moving gradually to a very focused marketing landscape, and this will be the tipping point to push them into that realm at a faster pace,” says Darren Leishman, CEO of Spitfire Inbound.

For digital agencies or agencies with digital service offerings, this shift has been less painful, but agencies with offerings like TV ads (that require crew and a studio to shoot in) and eventing (where large groups of people meet) are the hardest hit.

“People are spending more time online and media figures are reflecting higher views than normal for online ads. Clients are cutting spend in offline channels in favor of online ones. However, most brands remain very cautious with marketing spend in general at this time,” says Brian Carter, Executive Creative Director at Digitas Liquorice.

Clint Paterson, CEO at sport and entertainment agency Levergy, adds: “New behaviors and lifestyles will take root, but it’s critically important to remember, people’s passions won’t die. The role of the brand or event owner becomes one of adaption here, how can relationships be reinterpreted, reinvented and reimaged to generate the kind of connection with audiences appropriate to this new normality?”

Grace puts it another way: “Any cracks you had before Covid-19 will turn into gaping holes.”

Diana Springer, Partner: Head of Strategy for strategic consultancy Black & White, adds marketing as a whole has become increasingly performance-based and goal-orientated. But in unforeseen times, “brands have to reframe what they’re measuring,” says Springer. “Otherwise, they can lose relevance. You have to change how you define success to shift your strategy. This pandemic is really making us consider the fundamentals.” 

‘6 MARKETING THEMES FOR THIS TIME’

Shaun Frazao, Head of Digital at Wavemaker, advises six key pandemic-driven themes in marketing for Africa:

- Supporting the frontline workers
- Repurposing production (instead of making products, brands are making products to help their consumer, such as South African Breweries donating alcohol to make hand-sanitizer)
- Helping the vulnerable
- Health messages (posters on social distancing, Pick n Pay’s message to avoid panic buying, and SA Tourism advising people to travel later)
- Making staying at home easier (brands are trying to be empathetic by making staying at home easier, like Vumatel increasing internet speed for free)
- Distributing positivity (Nandos’ latest ad is all about remaining positive, and Nike did something similar).



“

88% of consumers want brands to talk to them now.

– Shaun Frazao

COVID COUTURE

Belgian designer Maison Martin Margiela must have peeked into the future when he debuted his embellished face masks in Paris in 2012. Eight years on, the likes of Louis Vuitton, Dior, Christian Siriano and other luxury fashion houses have transformed their studios and showrooms into mask-making facilities in the fight against Covid-19.

COMPILED BY: KEABETSWE MAFORA

Khosi Nkosi,
white mudcloth
face mask, **R110**
(\$5.94)

Givenchy, cap with
mask for men,
R10,926.11 (\$590)

Floyd Avenue,
Covid-2.0 denim
face mask, **R140**
(\$7.56)

NEW YORK-BASED FASHION DESIGNER
Christian Siriano said in an interview with *TIME*,
“I don’t think fashion will mean the same thing
after this... I mean, we still need fantasy and dreams
and those things to escape, but I think it will just be
different. It will need to be more meaningful and
whatever that is, I’m not sure yet, but it’s definitely
how I’m designing now, I’m thinking about it.” Other
talented designers, including those who have graced
fashion weeks and been a part of previous FORBES
AFRICA 30 Under 30 lists, have since joined in to curb
the spread of Covid-19 by creating durable work suits
and decorative ready-to-wear face masks. **F**

Christian Siriano,
black golden
petal mask,
R11,056.52
(\$595)

Anita Quansah,
Paracord tie masks,
Price on request

Inga Atelier,
multicolored masks, x2
mask **R299 (\$16)** | x5
mask **R499 (\$27)**

BlackCoffee,
Brushstrokes
face mask, **R80**
(\$4.32)

STOCKISTS

Christian Siriano store.christiansiriano.com • **Givenchy** www.givenchy.com • **Anita Quansah** anitaquansahlondon.com • **Love Jozi** lovejozi.com •
Inga Atelier www.ingaatelier.com • **Floyd Avenue** IG: @floydavenue • **Khosi Nkosi** www.yde.co.za

Dollar prices are approximate figures as per the exchange rate at the time of going to press.

Staying FLEXIBLE

The 19-year-old South African gymnast was all set for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in July, for which she had qualified. With the event's postponement, her goal hasn't changed, she says, only the timeline has.

BY MOTLABANA MONNAKGOTLA

AT JUST 19 YEARS OLD, CAITLIN ROOSKRANTZ IS South Africa's gold medal-winning international gymnast. From Florida, a small suburb in Roodepoort in Johannesburg, and currently in lockdown in the country, if the Covid-19 pandemic hadn't happened, Rooskrantz would have now been intensely training for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games in July, for which she had qualified.

"I qualified for the 2020 Games being the first woman in South Africa's gymnastics history to have achieved an outright qualification at the world championships," she told an audience of female powerhouses at the 2020 FORBES WOMAN AFRICA Leading Women Summit in Durban on March 6.

Even as a child, when she first took to gymnastics, she had been set on making it to the Olympics one day.

The news of the Games' postponement has been quite upsetting, but says Rooskrantz: "It is in the best interest of all the athletes because our health comes first, always!" Her favorite quote, in particular, comforts her at this time: "The goal hasn't changed, just the timeline has, keep going!"

Her training has continued through the lockdown and it has kept her afternoons busy.

"We have set programs to keep up our strength, fitness and flexibility. To try and keep up my mental game, I watch videos daily of any past successful competitions. I analyse my training videos and try to mentally put myself in the video," she says.

2019 had been "a spectacular year" for her.

"I managed to pass matric well with two distinctions and university entrance while training for my childhood dream. Not only did I bag South Africa's first-ever gold medal on uneven bars on an international stage, but at just 18 years old, I made history," she said at the summit, to an applauding audience.

In an interview with FORBES AFRICA, Rooskrantz reflects on the days when it all started, as a young child, when she was a bundle of energy and her parents knew early on that they had to redirect that energy to sport.

A teenager now, but if Rooskrantz has already seen much success, she has also experienced tragedy and hardship.

When she was just eight, her father, from whom she inherited her deep love for sport, passed away. He took his own life.

She had been training at a gymnastics center a few kilometers from

home, but that had to stop because of the tragedy and transportation issues. But her former trainer took it upon herself to regularly drive her there.

"Everything started escalating and things took a turn. I dropped all my school sports because I didn't have any time for them; I had to pick one, especially with the high demand of gym," she says.

Rooskrantz was placed on a high-performance program and soon started traveling; training more than four hours a day six days a week at the age of 11. This was the intermediate level of her tumbling (a gymnastic feat including the execution of acrobatic feats) profession and the best was yet to come.

Her first overseas trip was to Australia for a training camp in 2012. A few months later, Rooskrantz competed in Serbia for her first international competition. It might have not been the best competition for her, but it was great exposure.

In 2014, South Africa hosted the African gymnastics championships with Rooskrantz the youngest member of the junior team.

"I did well, I don't remember falling and I made it to the bar finals and that was the time I started to realize my potential on the asymmetric bar. I left that with a big boost to my confidence."

The young student was progressing quickly, reaching new heights.

On her last year as a junior in the 2016 Junior Commonwealth Games in Namibia, she made three apparatus finals; asymmetric bar, vault and the balancing beam.

An injury kept her away from the Commonwealth Games in Australia in 2018, when she went in for surgery and was off the apparatus for months.

"I was in bed after my operation but back at gym a week after, still on crutches, working on my upper body. In a sport like gymnastics, when you are that injured, it is critical to do something because you lose strength, flexibility and fitness. I was also working on my mental state," she says of those hard days. Her coach told her the surgery was either going to make or break her career. She was determined to return stronger. She did, and how. 🏆



Caitlin Rooskrantz

‘TRAINING LIKE A 40-YEAR- OLD’

South Africa’s 84-year-old golf legend Gary Player on the greatest honor of his life and being in lockdown with his family in the US.

BY BRANDON NEL

“WE ARE LIVING IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES. THIS IS NOT life as we have come to know it,” says South Africa’s nine-time Grand Slam golfer, Gary Player, who has been in lockdown with his wife Vivienne, in Pennsylvania, in the United States (US) since March.

The couple are visiting their daughter Amanda-Leigh Hall and her family. But Player had arrived in the US to also receive what he calls one of the greatest honors of his life, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, from President Donald Trump at the White House on March 23; some of the past recipients of the prestigious award include Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Mother Teresa, Toni Morrison, Tiger Woods and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

But the lockdown changed all plans.

So the golfer, best known for an illustrious playing career that included 165 professional victories, is now in his daughter’s home, “training like a 40-year-old”.

Elated, Player classifies the Presidential Medal of Freedom recognition as second to the honor of being a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

When asked how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected him, the world-renowned 84-year-old golfer, nicknamed the ‘Black Knight’, says in a phone interview from the US with FORBES AFRICA in April: “My heart goes out to everyone during this trying time.”

Player fears the aftermath of the pandemic could be devastating to all.

“The post-Covid-19 world may cause humans to sink into an inevitable hole of

depression, and I fear people will be dying not of the virus, but of hunger and thirst.”

Player says he prays numerous times a day to thank God for his blessings.

This year, he celebrates being married to Vivienne for 63 years.

“I love her even more now than I did back then, I wouldn’t trade the last 63 years for anything on this earth.”

Vivienne has traveled the entire route with Player whilst raising the couple’s six children: Jennifer, Marc, Wayne, Michelle, Theresa, and Amanda.

“I can safely, and with confidence, say that my wife is my best friend,” adds Player.

True to his second nickname, ‘Mr Fitness’, Player may be in lockdown in his daughter’s home but says he exercises diligently at the in-house gym.

He also ventures into the forested area on his daughter’s property for long, peaceful walks in solitude. He also uses a simulator at the house to tee off as though on a golf course.

Although practising isolation and social distancing, this experience has brought the family even closer.

“All of us participate in joint activities that were never possible before due to everyone’s busy lifestyles. I love my large family,” attests the man who led a lonely childhood but is now blessed with 22 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He is yet to meet his two-month-old great-grandchild born to granddaughter Antonia and who is the newest addition to his large family.

Once restrictions lift, Player hopes to return to normal life as soon as possible. As a businessman with “a hectic,



“

In 1961, Elvis Presley sent me a telegram with the wording ‘I want to meet you’. The feeling was mutual, of course.



Photos supplied

hectic schedule”, he is eager to get back to doing what he loves and says that being patient is not an easy feat.

Commenting on his own future, Player says he wishes to be remembered as a man who tried to contribute to society despite the mistakes he made.

“When I die and pass away, I want people to know that I tried my best in life. And that I am sorry for all the mistakes I made. Admittedly, we all make mistakes.

“I want to be remembered as a man who loved his fellow men,” says the legend who has also recently been key to integrating golf courses into local communities at home in South Africa.

“I am convinced there is a black girl or boy in South Africa today with tremendous athletic prowess, with the talent. If they can just be incentivized, then there is a chance,” Player told FORBES AFRICA for a story on his new initiatives in November 2018.

As a child growing up in South Africa, he suffered loss at an early age.

His mother, Muriel, died of cancer when he was barely nine. His father, Harry, was a miner in South Africa who worked underground, night and day.

“I suffered like a dog. I had to cook my own food, iron my own clothes, and make my own bed at that tender age,” Player says of life after his mother’s death.

Extremely poor, he calls it a “devastating and tough” time.

Player had to walk from the King Edwards VII all-boys public school in Johannesburg to the bus station by himself, come rain or shine.

“Every night, I went to bed crying. There were also times I wished I was dead,” recalls Player.

“At that time, my sister was away at boarding school, and my brother was away to fight in the war. He was only 17 years old when he left home.”

Player realized many years later that life consists of “10% of what happened to you when growing up, and the other 90% is how you reacted to that 10%.

He admits sports played a vital role throughout his life.

“I had ‘school colors’ in most of the major sport types while attending school,” he says.

It was his father who introduced him to golf.

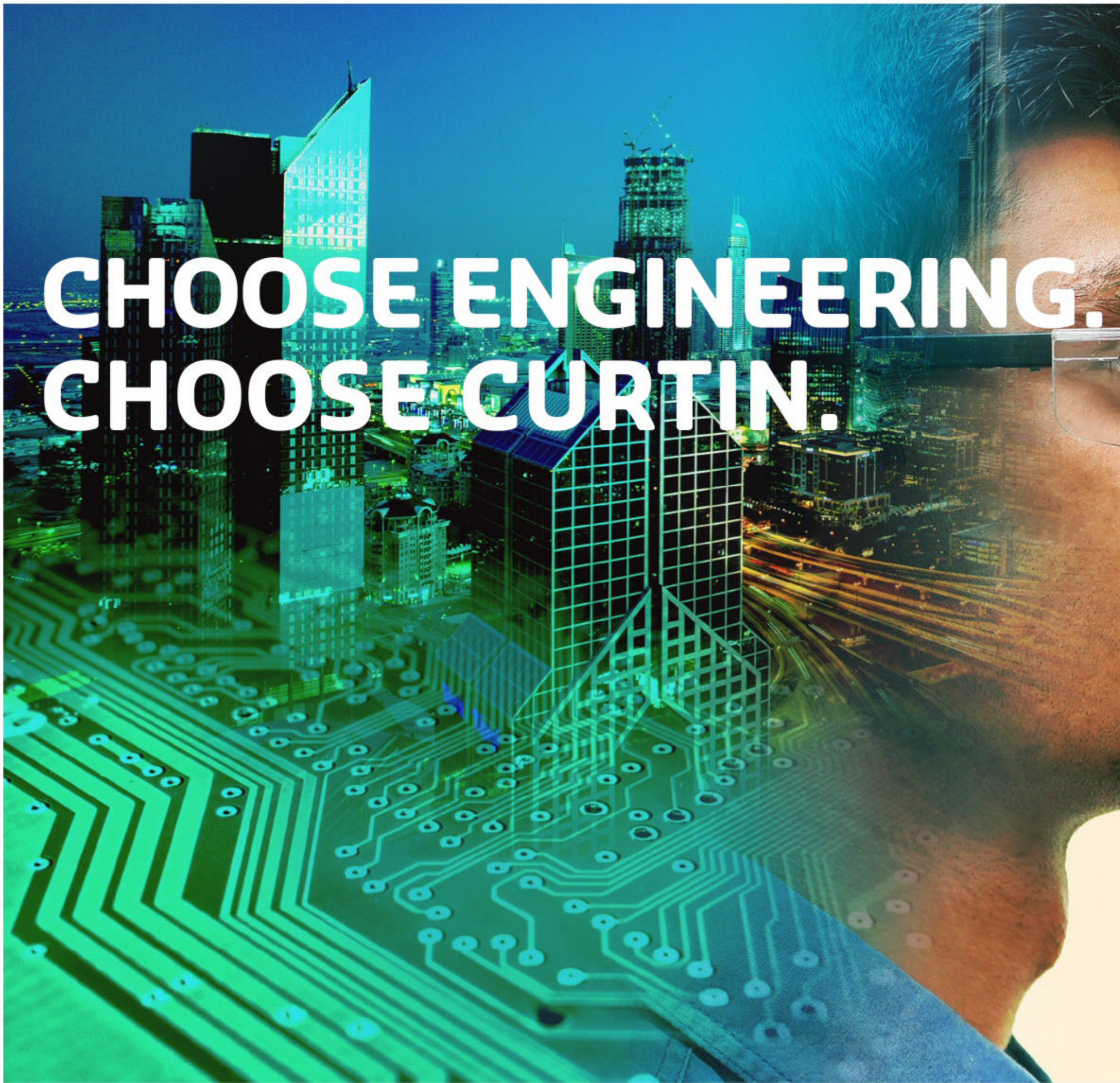
“At first, I thought golf was a sport for sissies. I was a muscled, fast rugby oke, you know,” he laughs.

His father bought him his first set of golf clubs after securing a loan, and that is where it all began.

“Golf is the hardest sport there is. And I know; I played them all.”

South Africa’s late former president Nelson Mandela was “the most incredible man” Player says he had the good fortune to know personally. Another meeting he will forever fondly remember was with the late Elvis Presley, the king of rock and roll.

“In 1961, Elvis Presley sent me a telegram with the wording ‘I want to meet you’. The feeling was mutual, of course. It was a truly heart-warming moment for me. And the rest is history.” 



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All Home And No Play

Not since World War II has the global sports industry faced such a crippling crisis, which is likely to cost billions of dollars in lost revenue and could yet see the permanent extinction of some teams and competitions.

BY NICK SAID

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC THAT HAS SPREAD across the world has the potential to change the face of sports forever, and Africa will not be spared, with one administrator suggesting the outbreak could set their game back 20 years.

The severity of the impact will be determined by how long it takes for society to live alongside the pandemic, but even if that were to happen in June, there has already been significant damage done.

Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Ahmad Ahmad has tried to provide a positive outlook, but knows the complexity of the situation on the continent is dire.

None of the 54 domestic leagues in Africa was still running in May, as Burundi was the last to close up shop the month before, but just when cross-border competitions such as the lucrative CAF Champions League, and qualifiers for the Africa Cup of Nations and World Cup, can resume, is anybody's guess given travel restrictions are likely to be in place for some time, and vary from country to country.

"CAF is already focused on the conditions for relaunching our

competitions and our events," Ahmad said in comments supplied to FORBES AFRICA.

"Never has a crisis of such great magnitude crossed the world, never has world sport decreed so many postponements of its programs and never has such a tsunami struck the most basic sporting practice.

"We are now condemned to rebuild the basics, or at least to reinforce them, to energize them so that at the time of recovery, we will be the best structured and best disposed to conquer or re-conquer, the dry territories of sport and football.

It is Ahmad's way of saying that any thought of returning to pre-coronavirus levels of engagement and sponsorship are fanciful in the short-term, or perhaps even medium-term.

His suggestion of having to "rebuild the basics" is a key admission and will be the same for many sports that face a sponsorship vacuum from some of the world's leading brands.

When airlines, major sponsors of African sport, have been laying off staff and cut their schedules to next to nothing, can they justify pumping millions of dollars into sport?

The same for car manufactures, loss-making banks and oil companies hit by the drop in the price of crude.

The health conditions to allow play for many sports in Africa may return this year, but the question is whether there will be the financial support vital to being able to play the game.

Selwyn Nathan, commissioner of South Africa's Sunshine Tour and a leading expert on global golf, suggests the pandemic may return the sport to the year 2000 in terms of financial capabilities.

"It could be like starting a business all over again, you can't have an attitude that people [sponsors] will just come back," Nathan says.

"It's not something unique to Africa, or sport anywhere in the world, but we are going to have to change the way we do things.

"Players will have to accept that they are not going to be playing for the same money, and organizers must accept they will have to ask for less [money] and possibly do more just to retain sponsors.

"It is going to fundamentally change the way we operate and we have to adapt to that."

Winners in some co-sanctioned Sunshine Tour and European Tour golf events can earn upwards of \$1.5-million per tournament, but Nathan believes those numbers will be fanciful for the foreseeable future and it is likely to be a fraction of that.

The pandemic could be the death knell for ailing Super Rugby, the southern hemisphere club championship that has been hanging on for dear life, as it was, due to dwindling interest and its format that sees players criss-cross the globe between Argentina, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and Japan.

In the case of world champion Springboks, that could actually work in their favor and see them looking north to Europe for club and country competitions, where the TV revenues are greater and load on players less, according to respected Stormers coach John Dobson.

"I believe there will be a restructuring of the game and that could be at Super Rugby's expense," Dobson says. "There could be stronger focus on domestic competitions with less travel and more tailored for television, because ultimately, that is where you get the revenue to run the game.

"It's critical you have a product that is appealing to rugby fans, and after this period, maybe that will rather involve South African teams playing in the [European] Heineken Cup. I don't know, but something has to change."

Nicolas Pompigne-Mognard, who is chairman of the APO Group, a communication and business consultancy in Africa, says he has seen first-hand the toll the virus has taken on sports

federations almost across the board.

"I think, unfortunately, it will have a devastating effect for many. First of all, athletes cannot train properly and when you are at the level of international competition, just a few percentage points off can compromise your body," he says.

"Added to that, there is no competition and the longer this goes on, the longer it will take for athletes to return to peak performances, so in the near term, you will have a poorer product for television and sponsors."

Pompigne-Mognard says cross-border competitions are vital in Africa and it is in these multi-national tournaments where many federations across different sports make most of their revenue.

"Each African nation is unlikely to return to full health at the same time, so, for example, the Basketball Africa League, which involves 12 teams from across the continent has to be put on hold until travel is possible.

"It will go ahead, but the question is when and what are the financial consequences of this? It is something that we cannot quantify now, so we live in this state of uncertainty and that is not good for anybody, sport or business."

The postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games to 2021 has brought much relief for many athletes, who had seen their training regimes brought to a halt, or at best conducted in the confines of their own home.

Olympic gold medalist swimmer Chad le Clos had had to make do with what he has at home while in lockdown in South Africa, one of thousands of elite athletes from across Africa in similar situations.

"It is what it is and I am happy with the decision (to move the Olympics) that has been made," Le Clos says. "I have a small pool at home, so I attach a cord that allows me to stay stationary as I swim."

"We cannot afford to take a break, even in lockdown. You cannot let yourself lose the months and months of work that you have put into your body.

"I don't know where or when I will compete again, but you have to stay positive. You have to hope for the best, that is all we can do." 



“Never has world sport decreed so many postponements of its programs.
– Confederation of African Football (CAF) President Ahmad Ahmad

THE SOUTH AFRICAN WHO WANTS To Be The Fastest Man In The World

Recovering from a knee injury, Wayde van Niekerk was all set to defend his title at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. In lockdown in South Africa, the Mo Salah and Liverpool fan is instead working on his endurance and finding positivity in chaos.

BY RENUKA METHIL

A GOOD SPORTSMAN CAN NEVER BE LOCKED DOWN. Just ask Cape Town-born Wayde van Niekerk, who made history at the 2016 Rio Olympics with a record-breaking performance as a track and field athlete.

In a way, the lockdown in South Africa has been an extension of Van Niekerk's own time away from the limelight, when he was already living and training indoors, building on his physical and mental strength, after a serious knee injury in 2017.

The injury that kept him away from the track had meant "hibernation" of a different kind when he was steering himself for the next big competition in returning to the field again in 2020.

This was also going to be the year he was going to defend his 400m world record at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

"I came out of an injury, and it led to me entering a hibernation period of my life where a lot happened, internally, indoors, away from the TV screens," says Van Niekerk in a Zoom interview with FORBES AFRICA from his home in Bloemfontein in South Africa's Free State province, a day after the country lifted its stringent five-week lockdown with Level 4 restrictions.

"As this year started, I had shifted my mentality to becoming an athlete again, and getting ready for the next major competition, and then Covid-19 started, and that led to me taking a step back and shift back to the hibernation stage of training and strengthening myself.

"I am blessed and privileged to have equipment around me and a gym setup at home. So I was well-prepared even before the pandemic... but you do miss the track, but this pandemic is something we all have to face together."

The 28-year-old, who showed promise from an early age, and who was also listed as one of FORBES AFRICA's 30 Under 30 achievers in 2019, says he has been using the time to find peace in chaos.

"What I have learned is to try and find that peace, that positivity and calm in this storm. It's a mentality shift I had to meditate on, that I build a positive foundation, that I reap every strength and positivity invested in me, that once I come out of the injury, I come out stronger. Now, I am making sure my physical and mental strength can complement each other."

From 200-meter events as a junior athlete, to becoming a 400-meter specialist later, Van Niekerk is among the most versatile sprinters in the history of the sport.

For now, he says he also taken the time away from the track to commit to the less fortunate around him.

"I find it difficult to focus on just me... I am very passionate about helping those around me. I am not a fan of wanting to do things that become a media event."

The transition from indoor fitness to outdoor training, once the lockdown regulations fully lift, is not going to be easy.

"There are a lot of technical things in terms of getting 100% race-fit for an international stage and trying to do some competitions; to just shake off that rust and get the legs going and the body moving and the blood flowing again. There will be a whole few months before we get to be at the level and shape where we can improve ourselves as athletes," he says.

The ardent Mo Salah and Liverpool fan has also been engaging with his network of sports stars around the world. Jamaican former sprinter Usain Bolt is a good friend.

"I communicate with most, but Usain is more about the banter. He's always teasing me about the Premier League not going to finish, so they keep trying to tap into that nerve of mine as I am a passionate Liverpool supporter. So I am trying not to entertain that side of them," laughs Van Niekerk.

As a child, Van Niekerk dreamed of becoming the fastest man in the world. It's a dream that still keeps the speedster going.

"It is what I have been investing in ever since I was young, and what I want to achieve. With the barriers I broke came confidence, and why not believe in what I can achieve? I am invested 110% to want to improve the 100m, 200m and up to 400m. I am more hungry and determined than ever!" 



Photo by Matteo Pattini



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